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[*By courtesy of the Earl of Sandwich*

ELIZABETH, 3RD COUNTESS OF SANDWICH:
Her husband's "Gaoler"
(After the portrait by Michael Dahl)

The WAY *of* THE MONTAGUES

A GALLERY OF FAMILY PORTRAITS

by

BERNARD FALK

WITH 34 ILLUSTRATIONS

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One's past is what one is. It is the only way by which people should be judged.

OSCAR WILDE.

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FOREWORD

THE WAY OF THE MONTAGUES is primarily concerned with seventeenth and eighteenth century members of this justly-famed historic family, whose careers have appeared to the author either to have escaped adequate treatment, or, where not entirely neglected, to have only been cursorily dealt with. In the first category belong the Abbot Walter Montagu, the 1st and 2nd Dukes of Montagu, and Charles, Earl of Halifax, interest in whom is heightened by the riddle of his relations with the witty and sprightly Catharine Barton, Sir Isaac Newton's pretty niece, now examined in the light of the fullest available information ; in the second category are included the ill-fated and feckless Edward Montagu, ruined for over-tenderness towards plain-featured Catherine of Braganza ; his sister, Elizabeth, Lady Harvey, whose flair for intrigue rendered her a constant object of what was mostly unkind gossip, and that extraordinary woman, the poet Rochester's brilliantly gifted daughter, the 3rd Countess of Sandwich, commonly known as her husband's gaoler.

The appeal of these seven prodigies lies essentially in the fantastic or incredibly odd behaviour to which, in pursuit of their particular whims or ambitions, they lent themselves, or, would it be more correct to say ?, were drawn by their respective daemons. Bygone England is particularly rich in men and women of strange, piquant and eccentric personality, and it was only to be expected that a family of such marked individuality would be liberally represented in the vastly entertaining species.

To present the family, a comprehensive and succinct introduction, emphasising what appears to be a marked trait in the character of the earlier Montagues, has been necessary ; but beyond that the narrative makes no pretence to being a family history in the true sense of the term, its scope being purposefully contracted to allow the selected examples full measure of biographical treatment. A worthy and satisfactory record of the Montagues, even if it stopped, as the present work does, at the year 1757, would require to take in many star performers on the stage of history, who here receive no more than incidental or casual mention. Finally, just as the scope of the narrative is limited, so is the significance of the title, which applies strictly to the specified operative period and the personalities embraced in it.

The author cordially thanks the Earl of Sandwich for the loan of prints of two family portraits, Mr. F. C. W. Hiley for " vetting " the proofs, and

the Northampton, Kettering, Brighton and Hove libraries for services of various kinds. He is indebted, as usual, to the London Library for an unfailing supply of reference books.

Sources of reference will be found at the foot of each page concerned. This arrangement has from the author's own experience, and that of many readers, judging from innumerable letters he has received, much to recommend it, compared with the modern practice of assembling the references at the end of the book.

CHAPTER ONE

A SUCCESSFUL FAMILY

THE Montagues of Boughton, a pleasant enough family, taking them all in all, to write about, and for the most part entertaining, occupy a large, a notable, and on the whole a deserved, place in English history. If they have done remarkably well for themselves, they have performed extremely good service for their country, even when full allowance is made for the black sheep in the flock. Their not inadequate reward has been high and remunerative office, immense possessions, and the dukedoms of Montagu[1] and Manchester, together with the earldoms of Halifax[2] and Sandwich. The activities which won them these rich prizes have been marked by a commendable versatility of choice. To their eminent satisfaction and profit they have, to repeat a phrase of Gibbon's,[3] "embraced the fat slumbers of the Church." Equally they have shone as soldiers, sailors, diplomats and statesmen. But their principal avenue to success has been the law, for which they have shown a quite remarkable aptitude.

The name Montagu should be pronounced as Mountagu. "It was formerly so spelt," to quote Edward George Henry Montagu, 8th Earl of Sandwich,[4] "and was invariably so pronounced by all members of the family until very recent days." Such varieties as Mountague, Mountegue, and even Mountagewe, are to be met with at different periods, but usually it is a choice between Montagu and Montague, with the former taking firmer hold as the centuries advance.

Rather harshly it has been said of the Montagues that, as a family, their speciality has been unscrupulousness,[5] though why they, more than any other section of the governing class, should be singled out for censure is difficult to explain. Few of the old ruling families of England have a blameless record, and still less immaculate is the record of those who rose to power under the Stuarts, when to be too scrupulous was to risk being passed over or crushed. The worst that can be said of the early Montagues is that, with the exception of the 2nd Lord Montagu of Boughton, who studied his conscience and strove to walk in the ways of the righteous, they were not so exacting in their standards as Halifax *The Trimmer*, or the ill-fated Lord Russell. They behaved according to the conventions and opinions of their Age, and if when engaged on national enterprises they did not always ignore their own interest or convenience, they were merely following precedent. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries few were the men who did not enter politics for what they could get out of it. The courtier or job-seeker who failed to make the most of his opportunities would have been regarded as guilty of quixotic conduct. When Charles II. proclaimed that every man was a rogue until proved otherwise, he was speaking

[1], [2] Since extinct. [3] *Autobiography*.
[4] *Hinchingbrooke*, by E. G. H. Montagu, 8th Earl of Sandwich.
[5] *The Great Governing Families of England*, by Sanford and Townsend.

feelingly. He had in mind the people with whom he preferred to work, usually persons as unprincipled, immoral and selfish as himself.

Ralph Montagu, 1st Duke of Montagu, has been described as "an arrant knave", a label which closely fits him, but he was only one of many Montagues, and on the strength of his turpitude to brand the whole family as unscrupulous hardly seems fair. Nor can the charge justly lie against them because of the readiness of certain members of the family to buy promotions and titles in the open market. They lived in the time of James I. when political morality was at a low ebb, as evidenced by the predominance of that showy, pinchbeck character, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, who, with the consent and often at the instigation of his impecunious royal master, eager for his share of the plunder, drove a roaring trade in the sale of offices and honours, the tariff being nicely graduated to the individual capacity to pay. Those who could afford the sums demanded apparently saw nothing discreditable or shameful in the traffic. Their concern was simply to avoid being bled white. As for the disinterested onlooker, his reaction was mainly unsympathetic to those who bought in this market. It amused him to think that Buckingham could squeeze so much out of the vainglorious.

Among the most conspicuous of his dupes was Sir Henry Montagu, the supposedly astute lawyer, who was to be the future 1st Earl of Manchester.[1] Appointed Chief Justice in return for giving Buckingham's nominee the clerkship of the Court of King's Bench, worth over £4,000 a year, a dirty piece of work from which his predecessor, Sir Edward Coke, recoiled, he was later offered the more exalted and lucrative office of Lord Treasurer, on condition that he parted with the huge sum of £20,000. On his way to Newmarket [Dec. 1620], where he was to receive the white wand of office from the king, he called on Bacon, then Lord Chancellor, who, startled by the extravagant price he was paying, bade him take heed that wood [the staff of office] was dearer at Newmarket than at any place in England. The next time Montagu and Bacon met they were both sadly disillusioned men. After holding his new office for ten months only, Montagu had had to give way to Lionel Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex, receiving as a sop to his feelings the much inferior position of President of the Council, while Bacon, accused of corruption, had to vacate the Woolsack. Invited to sympathise with Montagu, the ex-Lord Chancellor remarked: "They have made me an example and you a precedent" [president].

Such being the atmosphere of the Stuart court, what temptation to be scrupulous had an ambitious man bent on a political or legal career? The answer is "none". Unless handicapped by the presence of a troublesome conscience, he proceeded to adapt himself to circumstance and environment, being careful not to prejudice his advancement by an inopportune display of fastidiousness. If he thought it paid him to buy a title, he shrugged his shoulders, and handed Buckingham or whoever represented the king, the agreed price.

[1] From time to time controversy has raged round the derivation of the title of the Earls and Dukes of Manchester. The best instructed opinion inclines to the view that it had nothing to do with Cottonopolis, but was taken from the pretty village of Godmanchester, Huntingdon, ten miles from Kimbolton Castle, seat of this branch of the Montagues.

It is probable, though not absolutely certain, that the Earl of Manchester's brother, Sir Edward Montagu, who had neither the other's push nor his calculating cynicism, was forced to pay handsomely for the barony which came to him in 1621. At any rate the sequence of events is most suggestive. In the summer of 1616, James I., accompanied by Villiers, went hunting in Rockingham Forest, of which Sir Edward was Lieutenant, and though, as he slyly complained, his host smelt a little of Puritanism, showed him every mark of esteem even to the extent of accepting a handkerchief, a fine specimen of needlework, from his host's mother, the blind Lady Montagu, and at night giving Montagu a good hug, coupled with two or three jovial taps on the head, all in token of genuine affection.[1] The following year the son and heir of Lord Chancellor Ellesmere, before whom Henry Montagu had been sworn in as Chief Justice, paid Villiers £20,000 in consideration of being made Earl of Bridgewater,[2] though an earldom, free of charge, had been offered his dying father. In 1618 Bishop James Montagu, the wide-awake and astute occupant of the See of Winchester, bent on curing the morbid and unprofitable fancies of his brother Edward, busy preparing for the next world, bade him keep his mind on this. "I hear of no Barons," he wrote him, "only a report that my Lord Chancellor [Bacon] shall have the making of one. If you have £10,000 in your purse, I think, if you know not how to bestow it better, you may have a barony for it."[3] That same year the Bishop unexpectedly died, leaving by his will a gold cup to the king and a ring of seventeen diamonds to Buckingham, who had already had a fine horse from Sir Edward. In 1621 Sir Edward Montagu became Lord Montagu of Boughton.

. . . . . .

Not unscrupulousness, but brain-power was the secret of the Montagues' success, sufficiently comprehensive to demand for its recording the allowance of many columns in the Dictionary of National Biography. Sir Francis Galton, founder of the science of eugenics, who investigated the almost unbroken rhythm of Montagu prosperity, found nothing in it to support the family solidarity theory. The explanation of their getting-on was just sheer ability: the possession of natural gifts of an exceedingly high order. He included the Montagues among the four hundred families whose analysed achievement led him to the conclusion that genius, or ability, as he later preferred to call it, was hereditary.

In confirmation of his theory he had only to point to the achievements of the progeny of the 2nd Sir Edward Montagu. All six sons, Edward, Walter, Henry, Charles, James and Sydney, were destined to become famous in more or less degree. Of course here and there the family pull did help, often making all the difference between success and failure in respect to a particular office. Sir Sydney Montagu, whose heart was set on the coveted

[1] Buccleuch MSS.

[2] *The Bridgewater Millions*, by Bernard Falk.

[3] Buccleuch MSS. Bacon, whose name is thus called into play, had no great liking for Bishop Montagu, and on the occasion of his cutting down some trees in a dark place, sarcastically remarked that it was the first dark place he had ever illuminated (Wombwell MSS.).

Mastership of the Requests, would never have got it, had not his brother, the Bishop, intervening in the nick of time, turned the scales in his favour.

Galton was right to feature good brains as the clue to the Montagu prosperity, but equally wrong to leave out family influence as a contributory factor, though in 1620 the sense of family solidarity was not strong enough to prevent the brothers Edward, Charles and Sydney invading Chancery with a dispute over a landed inheritance, much to the disgust of Bacon, who bade them seek the way of sweet reasonableness and compromise.

For three centuries at least the Montagues have been destined to exercise authority and power : sit in the seats of the mighty. This chronicle, ending as it does with the death of the 3rd Countess of Sandwich in 1757, stops short of the career of her much-abused grandson, the 4th Earl of Sandwich, whose varied achievements included the invention of sandwiches, and giving his name to a group of isles, but there is more than a sufficiency of family triumph to prove beyond doubt that their success was no fluke. They are, as Galton insists, an able race, born to ascendancy, who, when not improving upon, use to the best advantage the good brains bequeathed them by their sturdy and prosperous fifteenth century progenitor, Richard Montagu, formerly Richard Ladde, of Hanging Houghton, Lamport, Northants, grandfather of Sir Edward Montagu, Chief Justice of the King's Bench in Henry VIII.'s dangerous day. That he changed the honest-sounding name of Ladde for the more distinguished, though possibly no more ancient, name of Montagu, patronymic of the venerable Earls of Salisbury, is probably due to some such contingency as a condition attached to a Montagu inheritance.[1]

. . . . . .

If there is such a thing as a Montagu speciality, it is doing the unexpected. One rises from a study of the family idiosyncrasies impressed by the tendency of its members to be quite incalculable in their behaviour. At any particular moment they are liable to do entirely the opposite of what is expected of them ; to conduct themselves as fantastically as some of Shakespeare's comic characters, to be kingsmen one day, Cromwellians another day, and before the reckoning is ended, kingsmen once again ; in short, to fill all manner of rôles save that which seems appropriate to what has gone before. For this reason their history is charged with genuine interest and not a little of that rare commodity—real entertainment. The naked revelation of a bygone society's ways of life is so overlaid with moving, frequently passionate, intrigue, exciting adventure, perilous escapades and ludicrous capers as to transcend the bounds of a merely diverting family chronicle and become a piquant chapter of our island story.

Parts of the Montagu saga are braided with strands that might be taken

[1] In Appendix D to Vol. IX, *The Complete Peerage*, Miss Ethel Stokes, working on material supplied by the Earl of Sandwich, offers a convincing account of the ancestry of Sir Edward Montagu, Chief Justice of the King's Bench [1539], from whom the Dukes of Montagu and Manchester, and the Earls of Halifax and Sandwich are descended. Its effect is to sweep away the claim, adding little or nothing to the family's distinction, that the Montagues were descended from the feudal barons, the Earls of Salisbury, who were so named.

from the historical novels of Alexandre Dumas, so much life and colour do they owe to the interplay of audacious personality and exceptional circumstance. A character after the French novelist's own heart is Wat Montagu, perhaps the most extraordinary, as he is the least English, of all the strange figures with which this narrative proposes to deal. None presents such a complete contrast and break with family traditions and youthful upbringing, and none to the same degree as this second son of the swindled Earl of Manchester so forcibly gives the lie to early and fond expectation.

To begin with, a gay spark at the court of Charles I., bosom friend of the resplendent, courageous, but folly-ridden Duke of Buckingham, whom with an eye to the future his father sedulously woos, he shares many a noisy bout with inspired vagabonds, poets of a sort, who hang admiringly on the tavern speech of old Ben Jonson, all anxious to qualify as true sons of Ben. Partly under the influence of Henrietta Maria, and partly out of professed sympathy for the Old Faith, he doffs his Cavalier bonnet, dons the dun cassock of a Romish priest, and turns naturalized Frenchman, hoping in the fullness of time to graduate as Cardinal-statesman, after the manner of Richelieu or Mazarin into whose path his lot is thrown. So remarkable a somersault on his son's part is anything but pleasing to the old Earl, a stern and devout pillar of the Church, whose pious meditations on life and death are about to be cast into print, and equally as unwelcome to his Puritan brother, to be known one day as "the fighting Earl of Manchester".

In his transition from happy-go-lucky poet to priest bent on a Cardinal's red hat, Wat Montagu bears witness to the part that unsuspected forces play in the great decisions made by his kindred. This is especially true of his erratic cousin, Edward, elder son of the 2nd Lord Montagu of Boughton, whose whole fate was decided by a foolish gesture, the result, apparently, of overwhelming impulse. In the presence of Charles II.'s unattractive bride, the neglected and despised Catherine of Braganza, graceless in manner and ungainly in dress, he, Master of the Horse, behaves as one moonstruck. In a sudden accession of tenderness, explicable only on the basis that pity is indeed akin to love, he squeezes, all too ardently for her peace of mind, the soft and shapely hand of the dumpty queen; whereat she who is wholly unused to such endearments, being nothing of a coquette, asks mischievous questions, prompted as much by her innocence as her bewilderment. As a result her gallant is dropped, much to the joy of his backbiting enemy, Samuel Pepys, who has himself a weakness for hand-squeezing, and on occasion something more.

Fantastically as Edward behaves, he is, compared with his younger brother Ralph, future 1st Duke of Montagu, commonplace and restrained. That inspired master of expedient has made up his mind to marry the fabulously rich but entirely mad Duchess of Albemarle, whose vanity has gone to her head, and as the only sure passport to her heart and good graces pretends to be that high and mighty potentate, the Emperor of China.

In the same category of odd adventure are the experiments in matrimony of the 2nd Earl of Manchester, by all accounts a man of grave and sober

deportment, though of a changeable disposition. Marrying no fewer than five times, three wives hitherto being the normal ration for the most enthusiastic of his ancestors, he displays in the choice of his several brides a singularly limited taste. As far as possible he keeps to the same household, divesting it one by one, in order of maturity, of its more delectable blooms, the younger first, the older later. After what can only be considered a false start, or what the racing fraternity would call "a preliminary breather", he settles down to his quarry, concentrating on the family circle of Robert, Earl of Warwick. As his second wife he takes the nobleman's daughter, as his third that nobleman's niece; then, when his fourth wife has conveniently faded out, he selects as his fifth, that nobleman's widow; the Earl's grandmother, no doubt suitably agitated, meanwhile wondering when her turn would arrive.

To explain the extraordinary fascination exerted over the apparently hypnotised nobleman by the Warwick ménage, we are bound to imagine something specially enticing about the ladies, perhaps a bounteous measure of glamour to which he is pre-eminently susceptible. Whatever the attraction, it remains Lord Manchester's secret, securely locked in his bosom, and so beyond the prying gaze of his bemused contemporaries.

For appropriate comment we need, possibly, one with the wit and imagination of Rabelais. What we do hear is the sour and disappointing jibe[1] of Dr. Robert Creighton, Bishop of Bath and Wells after the Restoration: "Could any but a Presbyterian do this?" In face of such inadequate observation we may feel consoled that the prosy Bishop experienced no call to salute the equally outstanding performance of another Restoration hero, Heneage, 3rd Earl of Winchilsea, who fathered on his four wives no fewer than twenty-seven children. *In those days there were giants in the land.*

That Charles Montagu, Earl of Halifax, brilliant statesman and financier, is numbered among the family's "odd folk" is due entirely to the way he conducted himself in what one may speak of as "the curious affair of Catharine Barton". To this day his relations with the witty and charming niece of Sir Isaac Newton, his life-long friend, remain in the dim region of guesswork, and no one can say with absolute certainty whether the rôle she filled in his life was that of mistress, wife, or just innocent companion. The association began some time after the death of his wife, Anne, widow of the 3rd Earl of Manchester, who at the time of the marriage was old enough to be his grandmother. Gossip was unkind to Catharine, and by implication to Newton for whom she kept house, but Lord Halifax, for reasons of his own, took no steps to arrest or rebut the tittle-tattle, reserving what he had to say for his will. In this notable document, while assuring the witty niece of a substantial fortune, he testified to the affection and admiration which she had inspired in him, leaving to posterity the tantalising task of imparting into the tender phrases used what significance it chose.

In John, 2nd Duke of Montagu, son-in-law of Marlborough, and for all his quiddities easily the most likeable of the Montagues, the family flair for being different from other men reached its apotheosis. Though possessed

[1] Sir John Bramston's *Autobiography*.

of considerable brain-power, as Sir Robert Walpole willingly testified, he spent most of the time filched from Army and ceremonial duties in inventing more original forms of philanthropy, or devising new wheezes to amuse the town and annoy his petulant and scornful mother-in-law, Duchess Sarah, who had no patience with his booby-tricks. Fortunately his eccentricity was free from any touch of madness ; otherwise he might have been tempted to emulate the example of the Duc Mazarin, who, persuaded he had been turned into a tulip, insisted upon being placed in the sun and watered, his condition, as may readily be imagined, being worse in the early spring than at any other time.

This gallery of queer characters would scarcely be complete without the inclusion of two women, one, Elizabeth, Lady Harvey, aunt of the Montagu mentioned above, and the other, Lady Sandwich, his cousin by marriage. Lady Harvey, who elevated intrigue into a fine art, was a bird of the same feather as her brother, Ralph, 1st Duke of Montagu, while Lady Sandwich, to whose wit Saint Evremond, Pope and Chesterfield were eloquently to testify, seems to have been cast for the part of gaoler to her husband, the weak-willed 3rd Earl, described by Macky as a " tall thin black man " and elsewhere as " very ugly and a fop ".

Both women were skilled in the art of dissimulation, giving point to a remark made by the learned Whiston to Lady Jekyll [sister of Lord Somers and wife of Sir Joseph Jekyll, Master of the Rolls under George I.], who had asked him why Eve was made from one of Adam's ribs. He said he knew of no better reason than because it was the most crooked bone Adam had.

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To oddity, richness and diversity of character, the Montagues, judged in bulk, add many solid virtues, among which moral courage most deserves to be featured. Henry Montagu [third son of Sir Edward Montagu, Henry VIII.'s Chief Justice of the Common Pleas] had the temerity, when M.P. at the close of Elizabeth's reign, to deny the assertion made by one of the sergeants that all the subject's possessions were the sovereign's. He exhorted the Commons to examine all the preambles to subsidies, when they would at once see that they were free gifts.

The 1st Lord Montagu of Boughton, grandson of the old lawyer, would not be coerced out of his loyalty to Charles I., and as a consequence died a prisoner in the Savoy : his son, the 2nd Baron, refused to countenance the king being brought to trial, though he was one of the Commissioners to receive the king's person from the Scots and escort him to Holmby Castle. The 2nd Earl of Manchester, who, according to Clarendon, " loved his country with too unskilful a tenderness ", commanded the Parliament Army, but was equally the friend of freedom and monarchy, and in the end, true to his conscience, assisted in promoting the Restoration, as did his cousin, the 1st Earl of Sandwich, who, tradition has it, when urged to save his life, his vessel having been set on fire in Solebay by the Dutch, replied, " I see how things go, and am resolved to perish with the ship "—the *Royal James*.

Ralph Montagu, 1st Duke of Montagu, however great a rascal, had the

nerve to expose in Parliament Charles's trafficking with the French, an act which might easily have cost him his head, and later, when Marlborough and several leading Jacobites, on the strength of a document forged by a criminal named Young (purporting to be a bond of association between the General and others to restore James), were thrown into the Tower, he was one of the three members of the Council opposed to signing a warrant upon the evidence of a man "who had not yet had his ears cropped".[1] Ralph's uncle, Sir William Montagu, Chief Baron of the Exchequer, was dismissed by James II. for giving out that the "Test and Penal Laws could not be taken off without the consent of Parliament."

If there were Montagues who deemed discretion the better part of wisdom, they could nearly always plead *force majeure*. When the first Sir Edward Montagu was Speaker of the House of Commons, the burgesses hesitated to pass a war subsidy. Henry VIII. knew his man. Laying his hand on Montagu's head, he said simply, "Either my Bill passes to-morrow, or off comes your head." Henry being as good as his word, and Montagu valuing his life, the king got his Bill.[2] Despite this rough usage, he was chosen as one of the executors of the royal Will, while on account of his learning and certain infirmities, he was allowed in the royal presence to use and wear his bonnet on his head.

In the next reign, poor, affrighted Montagu was under similar duress, being ordered in turn by Edward VI. and the Duke of Northumberland to legalise the settlement of the Crown on Lady Jane Grey, wife of the Duke's son, which meant ignoring the claims of the Lady Mary, subsequently queen. Again fearing for his life he agreed, and when later called upon to justify his action, pleaded he had done no harm since Parliament alone could alter the succession, an excuse which Sir Edward Coke, with much reason and less mercy, denounced as "a simple, sinewless defence".

Yet, placed in the same position, how many men would care to act differently? In those passionate Tudor days to oppose the sovereign was to invite either long imprisonment or certain death. Henry VIII. was completely ruthless, and if Edward VI. was not much of a king, the Duke of Northumberland, on whose advice he acted, was not a person to be trifled with. And when the Tudors had gone, and it was the turn of the Stuarts, note how even Francis Bacon, whose mental stature was so much greater than that of Henry VIII.'s learned man, deemed it expedient to have a care for his safety, though the peril was not nearly so formidable. A good fellow at heart, though sorely-tried, full of wise saws and pious resolutions, Sir Edward Montagu expiated his weakness by surrendering lands, paying fines and serving six weeks in the Tower, his punishment hitting him all the harder because of his fears for the well-being of his seventeen children, fruit of his three marriages [six sons and eleven daughters], who were unwitting parties to his disgrace. In our more clement days so abundant a progeny would, alone, be held to atone for a multitude of sins.

Seen at his best the old lawyer takes on sympathetic outlines. When stepping down at his own request to the Common Pleas, a much less

[1] Churchill's *Marlborough*, Vol. I.
[2] According to Foss, the anecdote is legendary.

QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA, WITH HER DWARF JEFFREY HUDSON

(After the portrait by Van Dyck)

CHARLES II

significant post than the one he occupied in the King's Bench, he murmured, "I am now an old man and love the kitchen before the hall, the warmest place best suiting with my age!" His motto, which he endeavoured to live up to, had an equally appealing ring: "Do not have a hundred eyes for the shortcomings of your neighbours and not an eye to detect your own,"[1] a pleasing variant of the old proverb. His descendants were to be similarly addicted to wise saws and quaint proverbial sayings, as for example: "His love is as the December weather; frozen so hard it cannot be expressed."

. . . . . .

The early Montagues, almost without exception, are kindly and hospitable, their natures opposed to any form of cruelty. Theirs is genuine, undiluted kindness, not the dessicated brand which so frequently masquerades as such. Charles II., according to his apologists, had a tender heart. The same claim was also made for Jane Clemens, mother of Mark Twain, who, whenever she had kittens to drown, first warmed the water. Many a distressed writer and poet, many a starving soldier, was to bless God for the existence of the Montagues.

Appearances often failed to present a true picture of their characters. From their disbelief in long mourning and their readiness to replace a lost wife in the briefest space of time, it might be imagined that they were little given to sentimentality; yet such an assumption was challenged by the dying command of the 1st Lord Montagu, who was so roughly handled by the Parliamentary party: "Bury me next my sweet, faithful companion, Frances Cotton, who sleeps in Weekley Church." She was his second wife, torn away from life at the early age of 34. This Montagu, so Sir Philip Warwick in his life of Charles I. tells us, "bore much sway there [Northampton] that turned everything at his Beck, and the Multitude or Vulgars flocked about him when he came to Town, as if he had been their topical Deity."

An equally worthy gentleman was his upright son, the 2nd Baron, who found the puerilities and disorders of court life under Charles II. wholly intolerable, and, once back in the pleasant, god-fearing atmosphere of his Boughton home, resolved to stay there for good, denying himself the advancement which his co-operation in the Restoration had earned, and deaf to the plea of his son and daughter that the king greatly missed him. Only when peremptorily ordered by Parliament to come to town, did he show up in London, and then for no longer than was absolutely necessary. His heart remained in the country, where the people led honourable, if toilsome, lives, and there was mostly an abundance of good cheer; where, too, the air was sweet-smelling and pure, and the old English ways had not been contaminated as at Whitehall by imported French fashions.

At Boughton a man was sufficiently separated from the smoke, storm and stress of London as almost to fancy he were a thousand miles away; even so he missed little of the news that mattered. Every carrier brought the noble owner long chatty letters from well-informed relatives and friends, each with a nose for the plums of gossip. The Duchess of Cleveland was

[1] *The Montagues of Boughton*, by C. Wise.

back from Paris, hard up as ever, having lost £20,000 in money and jewels in one night's play. The Commissioners of the Treasury, warned by the king, were on guard against her importunities.—Nell Gwyn's mother had been found drowned in a ditch, near Westminster.—The king's scholars at Westminster School had fallen upon a bailiff in the execution of his office, and beaten him to death.—In a Church near St. Edmundsbury a jackdaw had alighted upon the head of a praying priest and carried off his periwig in its claws.[1]

. . . . . .

When exchanging confidences, the Montagues, particularly those of the seventeenth century, wrote most entertainingly, and with a frankness for which we, who live more than two hundred and fifty years later, can never be too grateful. So unceremoniously do they bare their hearts and minds that we see them in their true habit, and, imaginatively at least, can share their hopes, their fears, and even their calculations. A hundred whimsical touches, wisps of attractive character, unwind from their correspondence to testify to their merit and power to delight. Whatever they may be in company, they are not literary or consciously clever when writing to each other ; hence they escape the usual fate of bores, that is, being unreadable. They adhere to their standards of value, consecrated by tradition, and those who would marry into the family must bear careful scrutiny both as to reputation and means. The men whom their women shall wed must be of good birth, careful upbringing and advantageous prospects, well able to keep themselves and not be a burden on their fathers-in-law ; the women their sons should choose, if they are not to be traitors to the Montagu canon, must hail from good stock, and have substantial dowries based on territorial possessions, rather than in the form of liquid funds.

"I would not have my son to match above his own degree," writes the 1st Lord Montagu to his cousin, Montagu Wood, who has recommended rich Sir Henry Willoughby to bestow his daughter on Montagu's son and heir, "and rather to settle upon land than altogether upon money, both if I could, though it were the less in both . . . My fears for him [his son] made me think of marriage rather than my judgement, for he is only sixteen, and I had rather he should see a little of the world before settling down."[2]

The terms of recommendation employed by Montagu Wood indicate clearly the kind of appeal most likely to succeed with a prospective father-in-law: "He (Lord Montagu) hath three sons and two daughters ; his daughters very nobly matched, his two younger sons well provided for by their uncles, and therefore his eldest (the proposed son-in-law) is like to inherit all his lands, which are of great value, besides rich in houses, [and] in stock ; a lender and no borrower, a bountiful housekeeper, and a religious governed house, and his son a proper gentleman."[3]

It so happened that Miss Willoughby had views of her own, being quite a pert damsel, and though both parents approved, the match failed to materialise. In 1633, two years having elapsed, Edward Montagu, the future 2nd Lord Montagu, was wedded instead to Anne, daughter of Sir

[1] Buccleuch MSS.
[2, 3] Montagu of Beaulieu MSS.

Ralph Winwood, James I.'s Principal Secretary of State, which union was ultimately to bring Ditton Park, Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, into the Boughton Montagues' domain. Lord Montagu, beset in turn with the problem of how best to dispose of a marriageable daughter, took counsel with his widowed mother-in-law, whose doubts about the suitability of a suggested suitor were reinforced by the belief that the young man's father was likely to marry again, and in that event have more children. "Then your daughter must content herself with £1,000 a year it may be for the rest of her days, and perhaps never enjoy more of his [the old man's] money. I confess I am not satisfied, but think the young couple should have £500 a year more."[1]

Lady Winwood needlessly perturbed herself. Nothing was to come of the questionable suit. Elizabeth Montagu, the young woman who was being discussed, would in due course marry Sir Daniel Harvey—our future Ambassador in Constantinople. She was, when Lady Winwood debated her future, the old lady's guest at Ditton Park, a regular hoyden scampering about the country with her brothers at school holidays, and with equal zest drinking beer and eating immoderate quantities of fruit, to the great disgust of her sedate grandmother, and the alarm of her quiet-mannered father.

How greatly concerned the Montagues were not to blunder in their alliances, but to be sure that their daughters were given proper marriage settlements adjusted to the means of the men they were marrying, may be gathered from a letter sent by Elizabeth, Countess of Lindsey, to her father, the 1st Lord Montagu: "I cannot write that I have any hope to bestow any of my daughters, because I know not how things will fall out, but would ask you what jointure I may ask with a £2,000 portion from an estate of £2,000 a year. I stand out for £500 and they offer me but £300, though with promise of increase. I conceal the gentleman's name until things proceed further; but he is in possession of his estate, has only a mother living, and there are no exceptions against him, neither for his quality and [nor] parts."[2]

Though it would be wrong to charge the Montagues with despising money, they were never miserly or given to hoarding. On the contrary, if they had a noticeable fault, it was spending all too lavishly, even to the extent of running into debt, as was the way of the 2nd Duke of Montagu, whose income of £18,000 a year was often insufficient for his swollen needs. A goodly portion of their revenues was spent in charity or in the patronage of deserving genius. They loved fine houses, stuffed with splendid works of art and choice furniture, which taste involved them in heavy expenditure; and they prided themselves on generous hospitality and the best of fare, properly cooked. In more remote days the whole care of a typical Montagu household devolved on retainers who grew up with their masters, and on becoming old were pensioned off to make room for their sons and daughters, and so on, right down the years. But with French influences (thanks to Charles II.) prevailing, French cooks began to appear in the Montagu mansions, and letters extant show the trouble which the 2nd Duke of

[1], [2] Montagu of Beaulieu MSS.

Montagu took over the appointment of the best procurable Parisian chef. Possibly it had been better for the Montagues to have kept their solid English fare, and left the daintier French cuisine to courtiers like the Earl of St. Albans, who, as Charles himself admitted, was more French than English.

They were realists who steeled themselves to the inevitability of death, which was not to be made too much of. In her will, Anne Crouch, third and last wife of the 1st Lord Montagu, forbade her funeral at Boughton bearing hard on the mourners, who, she said, should be refreshed with a good dinner and plenty of beer! But if death was a subject to be avoided, not so the common ailments. A surprising amount of space in their correspondence was taken up with descriptions of each other's aches and pains, mostly indigestion, possibly from over-eating, for when food was plentiful—and our ancestors, be it remembered, had also their lean times—they did themselves well. It is quaint to notice the air of novelty with which little sugar cakes made with spirit of mint, otherwise peppermints, were recommended as an effective remedy.

The 1st Lord Montagu teased his tetchy mother by prescribing what he said was better than rhinoceros root that is but for white hands, to wit: "A joyful heart maketh a cheerful countenance," taken not from Galent (the famous Greek physician), but Solomon. "This cordial," he went on, "hath these properties—it will quicken the eye, ruddy the cheeks, clear the blood and make the skin fair. There is never a lady in this town but might be glad to know the secrecy of this, and it might save them much cost that they bestow upon colour and complexion."[1] Lord Montagu, for all he had married three times, was not what we might fairly call "a lady's man".

Though from the ample supplies which poured out from Boughton to the various Montagu relatives, it might be supposed there was no such thing as food stringency in seventeenth century England, the reverse was frequently the truth, as the following instances will show: On June 6th, 1600, Roger Montagu sent his brother, Sir Edward Montagu, four lemons which, though small, cost 4s. and were all he could get in London.[2] At to-day's values those lemons cost 10s. each.

On June 8th, 1617, Sir Charles Montagu wrote his brother, Sir Edward: "Your butcher has paid me £80 more for you. He complains of much loss, but I cannot see how, for we pay 3s. a stone for beef, which hath hardly been ever so dear."[3] By the time 1630 had been reached the suggestive phrase, "these loose and dear times",[4] was already on the Montagu lips.

Concerned with law and order, the members of the family argued that no ale should be sold above a penny a quart, and what was unsold should be given away to the poor.[5] Beer in those days was beer with a bite in it, and even reckoning the Stuart penny as the equivalent of 10d. to-day, it was still good value compared with the present price, and, what is more, it was in plentiful supply.

[1, 2, 3] Montagu of Beaulieu MSS.
[4, 5] Buccleuch MSS.

The outflow of food from Boughton was temptingly varied—lark, woodcock and swan pies ("brave pies" to repeat the delicious phrase of the Montagu ladies), venison, great chines of pork, huge collars of brawn, home-made confectionery, quince marmalade and sugar loaves. For what Montagu Wood said of the 1st Lord Montagu was true of all the Lords of Boughton: they were "bounteous house-keepers".

. . . . . .

That a family so prolific in out-sizes in eccentric or whimsical character should still be eligible for praise as shrewd, discerning and businesslike, is due to the presence in their blood of some restraining element, thanks to which, even in the most extreme cases, some sort of equilibrium is maintained between the conflicting claims of the intellectual, æsthetic, sensual and irrationally impulsive sides to their natures. No one urge, however violently pronounced, predominates to the utter rout of the others.

The religious enthusiast, Wat Montagu, is a cold realist who never loses sight of the main ends of his ambition, and while his piety is demonstrably deep and sincere, it does not prevent him from imitating Richelieu and Mazarin to the extent of living in good, though not extravagant style, a circumstance which, on the occasion of their visit to his elegant and tastefully furnished apartments in the Abbey of Pontoise, agreeably surprised his fond admirers, Anne of Austria and Henrietta Maria.

To seek a further example: Ralph Montagu, who of the family nearest approaches the familiar idea of the typical Restoration rake, was a voluptuary with a limited liability conscience, but still a conscience in good working order, placated by some such plea as that affected by the Duchesse de Rohan in her deathbed confession, "I admit I have sinned; yet never have I taken to myself more than one lover at a time."[1]

Compared with such debauched specimens as the 2nd Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Rochester, and Sir Charles Sedley, all his contemporaries, Ralph Montagu, even if he neglected few opportunities for gallantry, was quite a mild roué, saved from downright profligacy by the imperious claims of his ambition, and by what was equally compelling a motive—pride of race, which never entirely allowed him to forget the obligations of self-respect and the duty he owed his decent-living parent.

That the Montagues are not included in the history of the rakes is due to the exercise of a measure of self-restraint, and not to want of success with the ladies, who usually found them most appealing. Physical grace played but a small part in their amorous adventures, for apart from Charles, 1st Duke of Manchester, and John, 2nd Duke of Montagu, they were not exceptionally endowed with good looks. Their charm has lain rather in vigour and freshness of personality that went with a poise indicative of good breeding and a long tradition of position and power; in persistency of will, in the ability to be witty, entertaining, and, not least, different from the rest of their fellows, or, rather, as already emphasised, utterly unexpected in their behaviour.

[1] Her kinswoman, the Duchesse de Chevreuse, similarly rationed herself.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RELIGIOUS SCHEMER

FEW men can be said to have started life under more favourable auspices than Walter[1] Montagu, future Lord Abbot of St. Martin's, near Pontoise, one of the extravagant types for which the seventeenth century was to be pre-eminently distinguished. Environment, period, personal circumstance, natural inclination, all were propitious for a life of passionate intrigue and high adventure, such as was to be his exciting, and, for the most part, fortunate lot.

Second son of Sir Henry Montagu, 1st Earl of Manchester, holder in turn of the most distinguished offices in the State, he could hope within the range of the Law, the Church, and the diplomatic service, to command enviable openings, leading, if properly used, to fortune. He had the necessary qualities for success—energy, capacity for improving, and the gift of making useful friends, along with the incentive for doing well which comes from not being too handsomely provided for. The title and ancestral estates would go to his elder brother, and he must be content with a moderate competency to supplement his earnings. As his father's son he knew all too well that, just as important as acquiring powerful friends, was not creating enemies, or becoming the target of malicious intrigue, in those days the chief amusement of his, the governing, class.

Montagu's youth, which was passed in the reigns of James I. and Charles I., coincided with the astonishing rise to power of Richelieu, who unconsciously perhaps, but none the less assuredly, was among his mentors, and with the predominance of George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham, his friend and patron. His early middle-age corresponded with that troubled period conspicuous alike for the misfortunes endured by the two queens, Henrietta Maria, and Anne of Austria, and for the plots of the astonishing trouble-maker, the Duchesse de Chevreuse, rightly described as "the most dangerous woman in France", with whom he was to have a brief but extremely passionate love-passage. His mature years, when he could claim to have an established position, synchronised with the rule of Mazarin and the exile and restoration of Charles II., both of whom at crucial turning-points in their careers were to appeal to him for help, without subsequently feeling any need to reciprocate these good offices.

To Buckingham, his father's expensive friend, he owed his apprenticeship to secret service and diplomacy, likewise the start of his acquaintance with Richelieu; to Charles I.'s queen his debt was even greater, though perhaps he would have done better never to have come under her ken. She encouraged his progress as a diplomatic agent and was largely responsible for his going over to Rome, becoming a priest, and being regarded by the Puritan House of Commons as a dangerous plotter. Through Henrietta Maria he was first to meet that mixture of folly and headstrong pride,

[1] Familiarly known as Wat or Watt.

Marie de' Medici, her mother, whom, among others, he would later have to thank for being shut up in the Bastille ; as also the attractive but neglected Anne of Austria, her sister-in-law, and finally the one woman in his long career for whom he cherished the most unselfish affection, Henrietta's daughter, the adorable, sadly mismated Henriette, Duchesse d'Orléans.

But it was the beautiful Duchesse de Chevreuse, with her charming oval face, blonde hair, blue eyes, ruby lips and captivating figure, who stimulated in him a decided taste for intrigue, an unconquerable itch for having a finger in every pie, an interminable passion, in her case amounting almost to a disease, for pulling strings behind the scenes, and aspiring to be a power with whom the great ones of the earth must reckon. That, as one of his lady-loves, perhaps his last, she helped to delay the change-over from plumed cavalier, full of the joy of life, to serious-minded, ambitious servant of the Romish Church, is not improbable ; but no influences could withstand for long the forces driving him towards his appointed goal.

That he should enjoy the respect and confidence of four of these great ladies, all with their own divergent and contrasting sympathies, their widely separated interests and ambitions, says much for his tact, as well as for the strength and engaging quality of his personality. Richelieu, who could simulate devotion when it suited his purpose, might bend the lonely and passionate Marie de' Medici to his will, though in the end she was to hate him for his ingratitude to her, founder of his greatness. Mazarin, suave, persuasive and more fastidious in his methods, might dominate the sentimental, mildly intelligent Anne of Austria, ever dreaming of the romance of which Louis XIII. had starved her ; but neither, despite his splendid and varied gifts, was capable of such an extraordinary performance as Montagu's : gaining the interest and affection of the most remarkable woman of all four, the Duchesse de Chevreuse (whom each Cardinal in turn was to find an awkward enemy), without more than temporarily inconveniencing himself with any of the others. True, the Duchesse contributed to his clash with Marie de' Medici, but at the time, it must be remembered, he was acting as agent for a country at war with France.

While in cultural development he was the equal and more of either Cardinal, in the grasp of affairs, in the delicate business of cajoling men to his will, in sinuosity of mind, and in the extremely difficult art of always being a move ahead of one's enemy, he was decidedly their inferior. But where they, admittedly subjected to an infinitely greater and more searching test, aroused opposition and distrust, he, in the same pro-Catholic atmosphere, managed to excite enduring confidence and affection. Seldom were his motives challenged, or his advice questioned, by his religious compatriots.

With Richelieu and Mazarin religion was first and last a matter of politics ; with him it was a passion of the soul. Primarily he sought not his own benefit, but that of the Church he was destined to serve with such frenetic zeal. He wanted to become a Cardinal ; yet in the pursuit of this aim he never subordinated all other activities. In the ultimate analysis its attainment remained only a secondary, a subsidiary, though actively persistent consideration on his part.

Though from the point of view of tangible achievement Montagu is

entirely eclipsed by the two Cardinals, yet in loftiness of vision and towering reach of ambition he falls little behind them. Consumed with a burning enthusiasm for his adopted religion, he bent all his energies to the carrying out of the plan inaugurated by Pope Urban VIII. and directed by Cardinal Barberini, his nephew, the self-acclaimed Protector of England, for reviving the Catholic supremacy in this country, so undoing the work of Henry VIII. Of these activities we know only of his unsuccessful attempt to coerce into the arms of Rome Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, youngest son of Henrietta Maria, and his close co-operation with Charles II.'s grand design of reconciling England to the Old Faith.

He wanted to be a Cardinal, and, if possible, a Minister of State like Richelieu and Mazarin, so that he could the more effectively serve the Catholic cause, and he made the first bid for the coveted distinction as early as 1641, when the praise bestowed on his efforts for the Church seemed to promise quick promotion to the purple. To urge his claims on the Holy See he had hit upon a strange choice—Robert Sidney, the lettered 2nd Earl of Leicester[1], under whom, when Ambassador in Paris, he had served as attaché. Modesty forbidding him to apply direct to Leicester, he had got his brother, the Puritan Lord Mandeville, later 2nd Earl of Manchester, to address him on his behalf.

But the Earl's reply, if kindly and sympathetic, was terribly disappointing. "I should be glad to help your brother to a Cardinal's hat," he wrote, "for I wish him very well anywhere but in England, and there too, if he were our brother as well as yours; but I have no power in the Consistory. All those of that dependance shun me like the plague; and if they of the other side think ill of me too, I have ill luck, but I do not care, for in despite of the world, I will, with God's blessing, live and die an honest man, and your Lordship's brother and humble servant."[2]

Neither Henrietta Maria nor Anne of Austria carried him further towards his Red Hat, the former because she lacked the necessary influence, the latter because she was prevented by Mazarin, jealous of Montagu's high standing with her. Whether as he aged he abandoned all thoughts of promotion is uncertain. If not, his hopes must have been appreciably quickened in 1669—he was then 65—by the confidence reposed in him by Louis XIV. and the Duchesse d'Orléans, who, in the negotiations that preceded the secret Treaty of Dover, signed in 1670, relied upon him to translate the English documents and draft the French replies.[3] Montagu's interest lay not so much in the alliance that was being shaped between the two countries, as in the "grand design" for the catholicising of England,

[1] The Earl of Leicester was father of the republican Algernon Sidney, of Henry Sidney, "handsomest man in England", and sometime lover of Anne, Duchess of York; and of the charming Dorothy Sidney, Waller's *Sacharissa*.

[2] *Court and Society from Elizabeth to Anne*, by the Duke of Manchester, 1864. . . . Leicester was connected by marriage with the Montagues, which accounts for his signing himself, "Your lordship's brother."

[3] At Ugbrooke Park, Chudleigh, Devon, the curious may see an interesting relic of the secret negotiations in the shape of a paper in the handwriting of Sir Thomas Clifford of the Cabal, one of the signatories to the Treaty, bearing this endorsement:

Sent to Madam[e], Jan 24 $\frac{69}{70}$ To be translated by Mr. Montagu and delivered.—

Charles II. and Madame, by C. H. Hartmann.

which Charles at a convenient hour was supposed to carry out. Had the "grand design" succeeded, beyond a doubt Montagu's reward would have been a Cardinalate. But was there ever the slightest chance of this happening? None was so well aware as Charles that national feeling was opposed to the resumption of Catholic supremacy, and in any case he was too prudent, and in his religious affiliations too lukewarm, to take any risks, being resolved, to repeat his familiar words, "not to go on his travels again".[1]

Single-minded in his devotion to his adopted faith, and somewhat of a romanticist, Montagu could not bring himself to believe that in matters of religion people could be swayed, not so much by principle and conviction, as by political and personal motives. It would have profited him to have had a little of Richelieu's unsentimental realism.

That he did not finish up a Cardinal may seem to rob him of a certain historical significance, but it is questionable whether the Red Hat would have added to his bulk. He did far more for the Catholic cause than several who were promoted to the purple, notably the attractive adventurer, de Retz, and it is strange that he should have been so neglected, or at the best so perfunctorily treated, by the Catholic historians, whose space in many instances has been devoted to men who were much less effective, and certainly much less important, instruments of papal policy.

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Montagu stands apart from the rest of his kinsfolk by virtue of the extraordinary gulf separating the first and second halves of his life: 1, when as the gay Cavalier he was a veritable squire of dames, shouting at odd moments snatches of tepid verse into the friendly, more inspired ear of feckless Tom Carew: 2, when, as the ardent and untiring advocate of the Universal Faith, he submitted to a mode of life whose practice of self-denial was a complete reversal of his previous habits, and whose values and rewards were entirely different from those he had been taught to respect.

Here, appropriately enough, may be posed the question to which his career insistently invites an answer: What was his greatest triumph? Gaining the ear of the four princesses? Influencing that incurable intriguer, the Duchesse de Chevreuse? Acting as agent for Mazarin and Louis XIV.? Forcing that slim-witted Cardinal to truckle to him? *None of these things.* His greatest triumph was something much simpler, that secured over himself: overcoming a deeply-rooted inclination for the unfettered existence of the vagabonds who were his carefree tavern familiars. His natural instinct was to enjoy himself, to indulge in love-making, and share in the feasts of mirth organised by the sons of Ben.

Like most of his accomplished race he was a lady's man, hardly to be distinguished from any of the roystering crew who, in those gusty days, thought it worthy and manly to expend themselves in love-songs, not seldom exquisite compositions whose enchantment is independent of time and fashion. That he, boon comrade of such inspired troubadours as Carew, Aurelian Townsend, Sir John Suckling, and Sir Kenelm Digby, should in middle-age turn Romish priest argues not only a tremendous revolution

[1] On this point see *British Foreign Policy*, 1660–1672, by Dr. Keith Feiling.

in mental outlook, but a power of self-discipline given to few men. Once having broken with the blithesome past, endeared to him by countless happy memories, it was good-bye for ever to the life he had loved. He gave his youth to laughter and the thrills which go with exciting adventure ; he gave his prime and decline to the chaste satisfactions of his adopted religion.

Did he regret the violent change ? One hesitates to reply with a definite, unqualified " no ", for this man never fully revealed himself, even to those he liked the most. It may be significant that, at odd moments in congenial company, he would sufficiently relax to forget that he was a militant crusader for the Catholic cause, and behave more like a cultured man of wide intellectual interests with no particular axe to grind. Then his spirit, freed from what his surviving friends regarded as an unnatural bondage, recaptured some of the old magic and not a little of the wit which had made him welcome at every festival of song ; his conversation, latterly an exercise in logic-chopping, was humanised to the point of being of general interest.

These interludes were too rare and too intermittent to be mirrored in his writings, but here and there a sentence would flash out as if to show that the old mood was not wholly dead. In the essay devoted to clothes and ornaments, a feature of *The Accomplish'd Woman*, produced in 1656 and dedicated to the Duchess of Buckingham, then a fervent Catholic, he declared : " Habits and words should be suited to the time ; and as one would think them mad that should speak in Court the language of Chaucer ; so we would not judge better of such as would affect to be cloathed so too."

As a rule he was so laden with cares arising out of his holy office and the political entanglements of his royal friends, that rarely did he feel either the call or yet the need for the lighter exercise of his pen. Hence he was fated to earn a reputation for dullness, to be a master of yawns compared with his friend, de Retz, whose ecclesiastical duties never affected the sparkle of his writings. Nor could he be engaging even when inditing the commonplaces of an ordinary note of greeting.[1] His style took on a sort of Blue Book solemnity, further emphasised by abstruse and recondite phrases. Headed invariably with the Cross, sign of his holy calling, his official letters were concerned with doctrinal controversies into which, because of his great learning and acute reasoning power, he was often drawn. Studying them one feels he would have been in his element in the company of Peter Abelard or Origen—and nowhere else.

At no time was Wat Montagu a clear and exhilarating writer ; but that the priestly or monkish rôle should synchronise in his case with the loss of the warm human touch and the drying up of every suggestion of gaiety, an experience alien to most well-known Catholic writers, gives a fair idea of the havoc which fanaticism was to work in his nature. He accepted the whole body of papal dogma unreservedly and unquestioningly, reserving his narrowly limited critical intellect for the exposition and rebuttal of heretical fallacies. Conscious of a divinely inspired mission, he behaved as one called to save England from perdition, which in his view could only

[1] Specimens of his correspondence may be found in the Buccleuch MSS.

be done by bringing her back to the true Faith. His religion, it is no exaggeration to say, invaded and coloured every part of his emotional being, and determined nine-tenths of his actions.

It was not so with Richelieu, Mazarin and de Retz. With them religion was less an end in itself than a means to an end: the absolutism of the French monarch and their own private enrichment, in the case of the first two; the furtherance of his anti-monarchical ideas and the enlargement of his power, in the case of the last-named. There is little that was Christlike about the vast fortunes amassed by Richelieu and Mazarin at the expense, and often at the cost in human misery, of the lower orders they were supposed to serve and uplift. Their palaces, magnificent furnishings and glorious works of art, if they reflected an exquisite ideal of civilised life, can have carried few messages of comfort and consolation to the people ground down by oppression and heavy taxation, who wistfully remembered Henri Quatre's loudly acclaimed desire to see a fowl in every peasant's pot. Nor can the vagabondish life led by the brilliant, witty and utterly dissolute de Retz have exercised any influence for good among the sinful, to whom he was supposed to offer an inspiring example.

Montagu, admittedly, liked elegant surroundings and handsome furniture and plate, such as was suitable for the reception of the distinguished guests who made the pilgrimage to St. Martin's, Pontoise, of which he was Commendatory Abbot; but never did he use his priestly office to aggrandise himself. For many years the £5,000 a year or more he drew as salary went to aid victims of the Civil War (Protestants as well as Catholics) who sought refuge in France. Such was his reputation for succouring the distressed that he was chosen as Almoner by Henrietta Maria, the Duchesse d'Orléans and scores of grand ladies, each seeking by gifts to the poor to appease her conscience and redeem her sinful past. On this point the evidence of Anthony Wood, the Oxford antiquary, is of peculiar value: "Whereas Mazarin made it one of his chief endeavours to raise a family and to do such things as might perpetuate his name: so Montagu, who was of a most noble and generous spirit and a person of great piety, did act to the contrary by spending all that he could obtain for public and pious uses."[1]

In the attributes of character usually regarded as indispensable to success, Montagu, compared with Mazarin, lacked resourcefulness and pliancy, nor was he such a good hand at ruses, perhaps because he belonged to the Anglo-Saxon, and not to the Latin, order of genius. However he was just as persevering, and in the pursuance of his Catholicising policy could be just as relentless. In fixity of purpose and firmness of character he was the equal of both Richelieu and Mazarin, but he had neither the former's originality of mind and compelling intellect, nor his unrivalled faculty for discerning and concentrating on what was the immediate objective, while in the art of begetting devotion at little or no sacrifice to one's own comfort, he had everything to learn from Richelieu. Where he was outdistanced by Mazarin was in nimble-wittedness, power of dissimulation and adroit opportunism, which latter could often be made to pass as consummate

[1] *Fasti Oxonienses.*

statecraft. Presumably had all these redoubtable qualities met in his character he would have been greater than either Cardinal, but most certainly he would have paid for his greatness in an irritability of the spirit and a devastating cynicism from which he was mercifully saved.

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From the first it was obviously the idea of Wat Montagu's father that his son should become a diplomat, for he sent him abroad not merely to enlarge his mind and acquire, what was so highly esteemed, a Continental polish, but to learn to speak French and Italian properly, bettering the equipment of most of our Envoys who were content to be masters of Latin and Greek and naught else. His brother, Lord Mandeville, already boasted Continental experience, having accompanied Prince Charles on his reckless bride-hunting expedition to Spain. While in France he had many opportunities of meeting his boyhood friend, witty Tom Carew, then serving with Lord Herbert of Cherbury, whose charge of the Paris Embassy would last until April, 1624. The influence of Carew, cultured, romantic and of fine mind, might have been of immeasurable importance to him had it not been cut short by untimely death.

Profiting by his knowledge of France, Montagu persuaded Buckingham to employ him on a mission of some delicacy. He was to find out whether the arrangements for the betrothal of Henrietta Maria, the sister of Louis XIII., to Charles were proceeding as swiftly and as agreeably as the marriage treaty called for. His report, dated March, 1625, was favourable. On the prospective bride's solemn assurance that those of her own religion should attend upon the issue of the union, Pope Urban VIII. had granted the necessary dispensation for the mixed marriage, and "the lady was ready to be delivered in thirty days". It was a good start for Montagu, who was just 21.[1] One might almost speak of it as a fateful start, since with this mission was to begin an association with Henrietta Maria, then a sensitive and charming girl of fifteen, which would end only with her death. Moreover, during his stay in France, besides encountering Marie de' Medici, mother of the bride-to-be, he was to have his first meeting with the lady destined to play so romantic a part in his life—the redoubtable Marie Aimée de Rohan, Duchesse de Chevreuse. Friend and confidant of the neglected Anne of Austria, she was at this period extending her favours to Henry Rich, Lord Kensington [later Earl of Holland], one of the two English negotiators of the marriage treaty, though it is difficult to imagine what a woman of her presumed good taste and almost unlimited power of choice saw in this rather shoddy lady-killer with the handsome, effeminate face over which King James was apt to slobber.

Immensely wealthy and extremely clever, with almost every imaginable grace of mind and body, she encouraged with her bright eyes and witty tongue such influential admirers as were ready to co-operate with her various intrigues, plotting and love-making being her sole recreations. Those she elevated to the rank of lovers usually became her obedient slaves, often to their immense hurt. She was fastidious enough to indulge only one lover

[1] He was born in 1604.

at a time, who, while his short summer hour lasted, could be sure of her undivided devotion ; though, if he were wise, he prepared himself to be discarded at short notice. The Duc de Chevreuse, fashioned from commoner clay, bore all her caprices with truly heroic patience, yet, as constancy was never a conspicuous fault of his own, he was not entirely antipathetic to the view that marriage, rightly regarded, was meant to free and not to bind. Apart from his own laxity in morals, he had to be careful not to lay himself open to the scarifying retort that the man who had cuckolded her first husband, the Duc de Luynes (the great favourite of Louis XIII.), was scarcely in a position to preach on what constituted the duty of a wife.

Cardinal de Retz, who resisted her charm, swore that no one paid less heed to danger, or showed more contempt for scruples, than the Duchesse. The remark, coming from one whose immorality was a byword everywhere, can be accepted without demur. Her sole concern was to please the lover of the moment, even to the extent of endorsing his craziest whim. In his admirable biography of the Duchesse, Victor Cousin neatly summed her up in these words : "Love or gallantry was her first province, and the welfare of her lover her principal interest."

The Duc and Duchesse de Chevreuse having been hosts in Paris to Buckingham, who had been charged to escort the royal bride to England, were warmly received when they in turn descended on London along with the royal party.[1] Naturally enough, the Duchesse was curious to meet again the impulsive lover, who at her connivance, while promenading in the garden at Amiens, had attempted to embrace the fair, handsome but neglected wife of Louis XIII.[2]

But in the case of Montagu, whom she was often to see, a feeling deeper than curiosity pervaded her being, though not until the summer of 1627 were their relations to take on an intimate character.

An experienced and successful secret service agent who had greatly pleased Charles by his work, he had been commissioned to rally round Buckingham, seeking to relieve the Huguenots besieged in La Rochelle, such Protestant allies on the Continent as were opposed to Richelieu. Hoping to secure the adhesion of Lorraine, whose ruler, Charles IV., was the Duchesse's most recent lover, he invited her to act as intermediary in the negotiations. He found her in Nancy, whither for conspiring at his fall, she had been banished by Richelieu. To her, bored as she was at being exiled from Paris, his arrival was more than a delightful surprise ; it was a precious form of relief. Twenty-three, ardent, impressionable and eager for fresh experience, he made a strong appeal to this volatile creature of many loves, three years his senior, winning not only her promise to induce the Duc de Lorraine to assist Buckingham, but gaining entry into her heart. According to the Abbé Hugo [biographer of Lorraine] Montagu

[1] Calendar of State Papers : Charles I., Domestic.

[2] The famous episode, which has often been enlarged upon both by fiction writers and historians, seems on a careful study of the facts to reduce itself to an attempt on Buckingham's part to kiss the Queen, thwarted by her crying out in alarm. The French writer, Auguste Bailly, in his study of Richelieu, declares that the Queen's legs were bruised by the lace which flamed on the Don Juan's hose—rather suggestive of some kind of struggle.

fell so violently in love with the Duchesse that he was unable to control his passion, while she on her part, moved by subtler feelings, felt the need of being kind to him. With this solitary exception, so we are told, she remained faithful to her not unduly oppressive rule of one lover at a time.

From Nancy Montagu went on to Turin and Venice, disappointed at receiving nothing but qualified promises of help. "Your Majesty's present undertakings," he told Charles on his return, "grow upon their own roots, and can be nourished by nothing but their own natural heat and vigour." But with characteristic Stuart obstinacy the king bade him return to the Continent and try again. Charles Emmanuel, ruler of Savoy, who hated Richelieu, would surely not miss such an opportunity of being revenged! But everything went wrong. That November, 1627, Buckingham was forced to withdraw his futile expedition, and Montagu, when three miles inside the Lorraine frontier, where as it was neutral territory he felt absolutely safe, was seized by Richelieu's agents and carried off to the château at Coiffy.

The Cardinal's object was not so much to arrest the man as to seize his papers, from which he hoped to learn the English plans and the names of the people who had promised to help him. Montagu was either not quick enough, or not cunning enough, to destroy the incriminating documents, and Richelieu got all the information he wanted. Naturally enough, the Duc de Lorraine protested against the brutal violation of his territory. No redress being forthcoming, he appealed to Marie de' Medici, who was temporarily in charge at Paris. She replied that, so far from the captors of Montagu being punished, they would be rewarded, and as for his being seized in Lorraine, this was unavoidable, as they had foreseen he would steer clear of French soil.

Under her instructions Montagu was removed under a strong escort of cavalry to the Bastille, but not before he had assured Anne of Austria that she had nothing to fear on his account. She had been worried lest the Duchesse de Chevreuse should unwittingly have compromised her. However, through La Porte,[1] her former *valet-de-chambre*, and now one of his guards, Montagu let her know that she was not mentioned in the seized papers, and need not be alarmed about anything he might say while under examination. This handsome behaviour endeared the queen to the chivalrous Englishman, and she made up her mind to repay him at the first opportunity.

Montagu's detention in the Bastille was marked by few harsh features. He was permitted a large measure of freedom and even granted an audience by Louis XIII. Speaking with great freedom, he told the king that the root of the trouble between England and France was Charles's belief that his affection for His Most Christian Majesty was not reciprocated. Anglo-French relations had also been poisoned by the refusal of the French Court, following the passionate episode in the gardens at Amiens, to receive Buckingham in Paris, as well as by the cruel treatment meted out to the Duchesse de Chevreuse, a lady beloved alike by the king, queen and people

[1] La Porte: *Memoires*, edited by Petitot.

of England. If Louis were well advised, he would cease to persecute a lady whose charm and intelligence rendered her a formidable enemy.

Though Richelieu agreed little good would come from a *rapprochement* with a woman of her malignant disposition, Louis XIII. was disposed to agree with Montagu, whose sincerity impressed him. In due course the Duchesse was re-admitted into France, though restricted to living at Dampierre, the Chevreuse domain, near Senlis, in the beautiful valley of the Yvette, while her quondam lover Montagu was allowed to return home.

He reached England on April 20th, 1628, little the worse for his ordeal. Instead of being rebuked for carelessness he was warmly congratulated by Charles, who thought highly of the service done him, as to which a critic of the day dryly remarked that any service rendered by such a one as Montagu must be worthless.[1]

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When a second English expeditionary force, this time under the Earl of Denbigh, came back without a blow being struck, it fell to Montagu to interrogate the over-cautious nobleman at Plymouth, and later to see that the third and last expedition under the Earl of Lindsey (married to his cousin) was properly victualled at Portsmouth. That someone should supervise the purchase of stores was absolutely imperative, as the most brazen-faced profiteering was taking place. His representations to Buckingham resulted in the Mayor and Aldermen being warned to see that the ship suppliers mended their ways. A few days later [August 23rd, 1628] that incarnation of pride, lust, courage and folly, his friend and patron Buckingham who, earlier that morning, had been awakened with supposed better news from La Rochelle, lay dead with Felton's vengeful dagger in his left breast.

To witness the murder of one whom he judged so mighty, and "in whose favour he had sunned himself",[2] was a nerve-racking experience for Montagu, who had looked forward to a pleasant and profitable association with him. Had he not been under orders to join Lindsey's expedition, ready to sail for Rochelle, he would have found it still harder to recover from the awful shock. The Earl, if not a genius, was imbued with much common-sense, and convinced that to continue to struggle with the inadequate means at his disposal was to condemn his forces to useless slaughter, he arranged for a fortnight's armistice on the ostensible pretext of discussing an exchange of prisoners. In the interval he induced Richelieu to meet Montagu with a view to discovering some honourable basis for peace.

The meeting between the two men was most cordial, the Cardinal doing his best with banquets and supplies of wine and fruit from his own table to make up for his previous ill-usage of the Englishman. As a final mark of respect he ordered that Montagu, on leaving and returning to his sloop, should be escorted with torches.[3] To persuade him that further attacks by the English were doomed to failure, Richelieu showed him over the

[1] Charles I. State Papers. Domestic.
[2] Gardiner.
[3] Gardiner ; Carl Burckhardt, *Richelieu's Rise to Power.*

moles, which looked just as impregnable as they had been proclaimed. Louis, to whom Montagu thought it wise to appeal, was unprepared to offer better terms than his Minister, and flatly refused to allow any interference with his Huguenot subjects, or to promise them, as petitioned, full liberty of conscience.

This uncompromising attitude was roundly denounced by Charles, whom Montagu saw on October 14th, 1628. He was told to go back and say that it was at the express wish of the king of France that we were pledged to see that the terms originally granted to the Huguenots—freedom of belief and a certain degree of autonomy—were fully carried out. Of this empty bluster events made short work. The Rochellois, being at their last gasp, capitulated, and Richelieu took over their famous city. Tolerant from motives of expediency rather than from a sense of justice, he allowed the gallant defenders as generous a measure of liberty as before, though never again were they to be a power within a power. Gone for good was their political separatism.

As a reward for his strenuous but far from fruitful, services, Montagu was accorded varying grants, which, when his expenses were paid, must have left him considerably out of pocket. It is doubtful whether the different sums paid him, ranging from £200 to £1,100, totalled up to £3,000, poor recompense for eight or nine years' work. By way of bonus he received a quarter-share of an office for registering Chancery Writs costing 4d. each. What saved him was the liberal allowance he got from his wealthy father, who in 1627, when Lord Privy Seal, arranged that Wat and his elder brother, Edward, Viscount Mandeville, should share the pleasant office of Chief Ranger of the Forest of Waybridge, Huntingdon, formerly held by Sir Oliver and Henry Cromwell. The Cromwells were in a bad way financially, and Sir Oliver, uncle of the future Lord Protector, had been compelled to sell Waybridge, and Hinchingbrooke, Huntingdonshire, to the Earl of Manchester, who, already being well provided for, passed Hinchingbrooke on to Sir Sydney Montagu,[1] father of the future 1st Earl of Sandwich, the famous naval commander. Simultaneously with the sale of his property, Sir Oliver had surrendered his courtly offices, including that just taken over by Wat Montagu and his brother.[2]

Montagu continued for some years to be associated with the Secret Service, letters from his father indicating with what anxiety his movements in France were followed. Luckily enough, he escaped further hopeless quests. In a personal sense he had little more to show for his labours than a quickening of his faculties and the slowly dawning conviction that a career, such as Richelieu's, might be open to an Englishman with equal firmness of character and equal grasp of opportunity. What in introducing him to

[1] Buccleuch MSS.

[2] According to Gardiner, when the dissolution of the monasteries took place, the old nunnery at Hinchingbrooke was given by Thomas Cromwell to a young kinsman, who took the name of Cromwell. Sir Richard Cromwell, who was lucky not to share the fate of his patron, had no money-sense, and his son and grandson, being similarly extravagant, wasted their splendid inheritance. In his turn, Sir Oliver, son of the Cromwell known as "the Golden Knight", developed the same passion for magnificence and prodigality, with the result that, being unable to keep up Hinchingbrooke, he sold out and retired to a less pretentious abode, finishing his days in modest comfort.

THE DUCHESSE DE CHEVREUSE
(After the portrait by Moreelse, once in the possession of Charles I)

EDWARD MONTAGU, 2ND EARL OF MANCHESTER

power Marie de' Medici did for the Cardinal, her daughter, Henrietta Maria, might well do for an Englishman similarly able to command her favour and affection.

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Though he continued to pass between England and France on the king's business, his duties were light and occupied only a small part of his time. Mostly he spent his days in pleasurable amusement, now with Thomas Carew who had been appointed Gentleman of the Privy Chamber, and Server (taster of dishes) to the king; now with such entertaining fellows as Aurelian Townsend or Sir Kenelm Digby. He enjoyed the goodwill of Henrietta Maria, who sometimes felt that she could have too much of her solemn-faced religious advisers, and was thankful for a moiety of light relief such as young Montagu and Tom Carew could be relied upon to provide.

Carew's occasional presence at the queen's Court was due, if gossip is to be believed, to a delectable display of presence of mind on his part. In the course of his duties as Gentleman of the Privy Chamber, he was called upon to light the king into the queen's Chamber, but one evening, seeing Henry Jermyn, later Earl of St. Albans, with his arm round Her Majesty's neck, he stumbled and put out the light, so allowing the lover to escape. Carew kept silent about what he had seen, and the king was never the wiser.[1] Not ungrateful, Henrietta Maria did her best to advance the poet, in whom she fancied she had found the perfect courtier, discreet for once in his feverish and disordered life.

What we know of Carew makes us regret that he was not fated to live long. A pupil in the school of Donne, and when Donne was incumbent of St. Dunstan's-in-the-Strand his parishioner, he poured into his delicate and charming verse few suggestions of his own passionate and reckless spirit. True his love poems paid homage to various fair and gentle mistresses, notably Lucinda of the beauteous eyes, otherwise Lucy Percy, second wife of James Hay, 1st Earl of Carlisle, but only in his longest poem, *A Rapture*, did his strongly developed sensuality demand expression. However, in his masque *Coelum Britannicum*, played before the king and queen on Shrove Tuesday night, February 18th, 1634, he was to make full amends, virtue being favourably extolled:

> Bewitching Syren, gilded rottenness,!
> Thou hast with cunning artifice display'd
> Th'enamel'd outside and the honied verge
> Of the fair cup, where deadly poison lurks:
> Within, a thousand sorrows dance the round,
> And like a shell, pain circles thee without.

Sir John Suckling was churlish enough to jeer at improvident Carew because of the physical misfortunes of his misspent life, and with equal lack of generosity to taunt Montagu, who had foolishly been persuaded to

[1] Anecdote told to Sir John Percival by old George Clarke, Lord of the Admiralty and Secretary to Prin e George of Denmark; quoted by Arthur Vincent in his admirable edition of Carew, *The Muses' Library*.

write a masque, on the lameness of his muse. The poet, who could scale the heights of enchantment with such haunting lines as :

> Her feet beneath her petticoat,
> Like little mice, stole in and out
> As if they fear'd the light.

would live to prove by his own example how often genius and mean passions dwell together.

But of all Montagu's associates, probably none approached Sir Kenelm Digby in singularity of character. The real place of this fantastic gentleman, half genius, half eccentric, was by the side of Lucrezia Borgia, so much of the Renaissance lust of life and beauty entered into his extravagant make-up. Admitted by her maids into the chamber of Venetia Stanley, later to become his wife, he reverently laid down next her side, and as she, unconscious of his presence, slept on, allowed his imagination to feast on the beauty that met his bewitched vision. This beauty he was to hymn in prose that ravishes the ear. To give but one passage, and that the mildest, of the voluptuous word-picture : "A natural ruddiness did shine through the skin as the sunbeams do through crystal or water, and ascertained him that it was flesh that he gazed upon, which yet he durst not touch for fear of melting it, so like snow it looked."

The wonder of Venetia Stanley is beyond decay. Still with old time reverence and awe we salute the voice

> So sweet, the words so fair,
> As some soft chime had stroked the air ;
> And though the sound had parted thence,
> Still left an echo in the sense.

These, to mention but a few, were the strangely-gifted souls with whom Wat Montagu delighted to spend his leisure hours, his wit and not seldom his purse being his contribution to their nightly entertainments. All were possessed by a daemon which betrayed them into the most absurd antics—crazy efforts at self-assertion. All seemed anxious to cram as much excitement, pleasure and odd adventure into the shortest possible space of time. Death might be on their very doorstep, such was their haste to get the last ounce of enjoyment out of life. All were devoted to the ladies, in whose pursuit they were prepared to do incredibly foolish things.

We are not to suppose that Wat Montagu's texture was greatly different from that of the others, or that he was much slower than his brother, the 2nd Earl of Manchester, hero of five marriages, in paying homage to the fair sex. Actually, what distinguished him from the rest was the skill with which he cloaked his amorous exploits, thereby escaping harmful talk. Indeed, beyond the somewhat vague allusion to his being Henrietta Maria's gallant, and the more substantial gossip connecting him with the Duchesse de Chevreuse, scandal, so busy with the names of his poetical brethren, found little in him to feed upon.

That he did not marry may have been due to the conviction that, with his future largely undecided, it would be a mistake to saddle himself with a wife. Possibly he was already turning over in his mind the advisability of one day going over to Rome, having since he joined Henrietta Maria's

circle been subjected to the most persistent proselytising propaganda. Meanwhile he oscillated between two irreconcilable and ever-widening extremes. When he was with Carew and the rest of the jovial band, he moved at his ease in a gay, tolerant, careless atmosphere of witty conversation, spiced with saucy chit-chat about their superiors. When he was with the queen and her Catholic entourage, he was conscious of an altogether more tense atmosphere, where frivolity was out of place and life assumed the aspect of a struggle with his soul as prize. Soon he was to realise that forces were encompassing him about which, if he were to continue free, he must conquer without delay.

Temporarily what saved him were his frequent visits to the Continent, often involving months of absence from England. His tavern friends regretted these calls abroad, for they missed his cheery, vital personality and his ever-open purse. So much better off than most, he was generous even to the extent of being foolhardy. As a poet, admittedly, he was unworthy of being mentioned in the same breath with the meanest of them ; but one and all agreed that his fine nature more than compensated for his want of inspiration. Their feelings were correctly conveyed by Carew who, on the return from an extended jaunt abroad of " our long'd for Montagu", bade him believe how much they mourned the loss of his company:

> For, thus divided from your noble parts
> This kingdom lives in exile, and all hearts
> That relish worth or honour, being rent
> From your perfections, suffer banishment.
> These are your public injuries ; but I
> Have a just private quarrel to defy
> And call you coward, thus to run away
> When you had pierced my heart, not daring stay
> Till I redeem'd my honour.

. . . . 1616114

It was never Montagu's intention to be seduced into an open demonstration of his incapacity as a poet, but either his friends out of mistaken kindness overcame his sensible objections, or he allowed himself to be cajoled by Henrietta Maria. Whatever the reason, he succeeded Aurelian Townsend in the writing of Court masques, the choice of either being an affront to Ben Jonson. From failure to agree with Inigo Jones he had been dropped, the world being the richer for the immortal jibe flung at the jealous architect :

Thy forehead is too narrow for my brand.

Entitled *The Shepheard's Paradise*, the comedy on which Montagu must have laboured for many months was privately acted before Charles I. by the queen and her ladies of honour on January 9th, 1633. The performance, intended to test Henrietta Maria's proficiency in English since her use of a tutor, developed into a test of her patience and good nature. It lasted eight hours and was said to have left her both exasperated and exhausted. The king, with more politeness than truth, meeting the old Earl of Manchester, then Privy Seal, " did mightily congratulate and extol unto his

lordship the rare parts of Mr. Walter Montagu, in poetry and otherwise,[1] so that he is a favourite with both their Majesties ".

There is some doubt as to whether the dreadful fustian was entirely the unaided work of Montagu, though it was bad enough to be so; for in a poem to Aurelian Townsend, his friend Carew spoke of *The Shepheard's Paradise* as his creation, " a strange mistake for one who knew both men equally well to have made."[2]

The comedy was first published in 1659, or twenty-six years later, apparently without the knowledge or authority of Montagu. The publisher was Thomas Dring, who in a preface asserted that Montagu was the author and bade the purchaser read it upon the square [give it all his attention]. In view of its unreadable character, Montagu's reluctance to give the world the benefit of his composition[3] is understandable. Horace Walpole did not exaggerate when in a copy of the comedy which had belonged to Topham Beauclerk, he wrote: " Walter Montagu was an admired wit in the Court of Charles I., but the following piece is such a mixture of stupidity, obscurity, probability, want of nature, conduct and invention, that his Catholicism must have been his chief recommendation to the queen, and her ignorance or want of skill in our language her only excuse for patronising and performing in so absurd and incomprehensible a performance."

Walpole's comment lacked the scarifying wit of Suckling, who in his memorable poem, *A Session of the Poets*, gave Montagu's effort the immortality of the following mention:

> Wat Montagu now stood forth to his trial,
> And did not so much as suspect a denial;
> But witty Apollo asked him first of all,
> If he understood his own pastoral.
> For, if he could do it, 'twould plainly appear,
> He understood more than any man there,
> And did merit the bays above all the rest,
> But the Monsieur[4] was modest, and silence confessed.

Later Patrick Carey, a contemporary minor poet, also had a dig at him;

> But tell mee pray, if ever you
> Read th' English of Watt Montague,
> Is't not more hard than French?
> And yett that will much easyer bee
> Then the strange gibb'ring mish-mash, wee
> Shall henceforth heare att th' Bench![5]

But even had Suckling and Carey spared Montagu their venomous wit, the pastoral would still have won a place in history, not by reason of any intrinsic merit, but because it inspired William Prynne's memorable attack on the queen. In his voluminous treatise, *Histrio-Mastix, A Scourge of*

[1] The cynical will agree with the " otherwise".

[2] *Poems of Thomas Carew*, by Arthur Vincent, *The Muses' Library*.

[3] Specimen verses of Montagu are prefixed to *Theophila or Love's Sacrifice*, by Edward Benlowes, a divine poem much appreciated at the time of publication, 1652, but later derided, Warburton, for instance, pronouncing Benlowes not less famous for his own bad poetry than for patronising bad poets.

[4] An allusion to Montagu's frequent trips to France. The end of this poem, as we gather from W. C. Hazlitt's edition of Suckling, was written and circulated in 1637.

[5] *Trivial Poems and Triolets*, 1651. Ed. Sir Walter Scott, 1820, p. 14.

Stage-Players, this vehement Puritan, the Cato of his age, censured Henrietta Maria for taking part in the performance. It was pleaded on his behalf, when he was arraigned in the Star Chamber, that as his work appeared in print the day after the pastoral was given, and had actually been printed two months before, it could not be intended to reflect on Her Majesty. But Prynne was well aware that the queen, notoriously fond of the Play and of dancing, was taking part in the rehearsals, and the phrases, "women actors, notorious whores", and "delight and skill in dancing a badge of lewd lascivious women and strumpets" occur not in the text, but at the very end of the Index, the part he would have reached when everybody knew of the forthcoming pastoral. Though Prynne was obviously guilty of gross disrespect to the queen, yet the sentence passed on him—a heavy fine, life imprisonment and loss of both ears—was far more disgraceful than his offence taken at the worst.

This production of Montagu's dull play marked an important, possibly a decisive, stage in his relations with Henrietta Maria, being the prelude to his adherence to her faith. Spurred on by her zealous advisers, quick to realise his potential usefulness to the Catholic cause, as well as by her own partiality for this agreeable and willing Court favourite, who wrote and spoke French like a native, she decided to complete his capture for Rome. The importance of his family, the strength of his personal devotion to her, and, by common consent, his exceptional abilities were all conclusive arguments for accomplishing his salvation on the lines indicated.

The human equation bulked large in subsequent developments. However zealous a daughter of the Church of Rome, Henrietta Maria was first and foremost a woman with Henri Quatre's passionate blood in her veins. Lodged in a country to whose people she was alien in temper and spirit, she could ill afford to dispense with the sympathetic companionship of such a cheerful and sanguine henchman as Montagu, whose admiration for his handsome mistress shone as unmistakably in his eyes as in his tepid verse.

Yet there was a time when they so violently disagreed that she must have wondered whether, after all, she was not mistaken in his affection for her. Strafford thought her treatment of Montagu savoured very much of ill-usage, which, if continued, would put him as much under her displeasure as were some of them.[1] But the ill-usage did not continue, and in 1635 all Montagu needed to make the queen his friend for life was openly to declare himself a Catholic, which to the joy of all her Court he proceeded to do. That the letter in which he broke the news to his aged father, a violent anti-Papist, should shock the old gentleman was understandable, but that, in his craving for sympathy, the Earl should hand it round for all his friends to peruse[2] was something Montagu could not have foreseen. It is impossible to believe that he wanted his apostasy openly advertised.

James Howell, the royalist spy, best known for his *Familiar Letters*, remembering Strafford's interest in the young man, sent him this note, "Oct. 22, 1635. Sir Kenelm Digby is gone over, and Mr. Wat Montagu hath taken a portion his father intended for him, and gone over a hot Roman to return no more." A month later, November 21st, 1635,

[1] *Strafford Papers.* [2] Gardiner.

the letter telling of Montagu's apostasy appeared in Paris, where he was serving as attaché, and that tender-hearted idealist, Lucius Cary, 2nd Viscount Falkland, took upon himself the task of answering it, prompted by the painful schism in his own household caused by his mother's Catholicising activities. His sister, Clementina Cary, was a professed nun who, helped by Montagu and Lord Aubigny [cousin of Charles II.] would found a religious establishment in St. Germains. Unfortunately Falkland's reply, *Discourse of Infallibility*, was too lacking in clarity and reasoning power to serve the purpose of a corrective.

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Both Digby and Montagu gloried in their new religious affiliation. As recently as 1935, or nearly three hundred years after it was written, there turned up in London the long letter, dated September 18th, 1636, in which Digby for the benefit of his friend, then at Turin, expatiated on his Catholic beliefs.[1] It is said that Montagu's conversion was finally brought about by witnessing the much talked-of exorcisms of the Ursuline nuns at Loudun.

To complete his apostasy Henrietta Maria persuaded him to visit Rome, and to furnish him with a suitable excuse gave him several commissions to undertake on behalf of the English Catholics.[2] As a further proof of her interest and affection, she provided Montagu with a personal letter of introduction to Pope Urban VIII. [Maffeo Barberini], which assured him of being favourably received by that fine specimen of Florentine culture, himself a poet given to experiments in the Horatian metre. "Overwhelming" was the only fitting word to describe the hospitality he received. In warmth and splendour it could not be excelled. Nothing calculated to make him proud and happy was neglected. The costly gifts at parting constituted a gesture inconceivably flattering. Small wonder that on returning to Paris he was loud in his praises of the Pope, to stand at whose elbow was a privilege, the more so since he cherished such an affectionate regard for the English nation.[3]

But he was still too much the prisoner of habit to be entirely changed by the visit to Rome. More than a meeting with the Pope was necessary to render him indifferent to the charms of a pretty woman and the call of the common passions, as he proved by taking himself off to Tours for another meeting with the much-buffeted Duchesse de Chevreuse, who was temporarily in residence there. This time, to share his delight in one whom he regarded as of unequalled fascination, he took with him a companion, whose rôle was to be that of onlooker, not active competitor. Montagu found the Duchesse busily occupied in plotting the ruin of Richelieu, which employment varied, or more often, accompanied by love-making, filled her day. Eight years' strenuous exertions had left their mark on her features, but she was still very attractive.

Writing to Anne of Austria, with whom she was still linked by a common hatred of Richelieu, she mentioned Montagu's arrival in the town ; where-

[1] Maggs' Autograph Catalogue, 1935.
[2] Dodd's *Church History*.
[3] Panzani *Memoires*. He was Papal agent in London, 1634–6.

upon the queen slyly teased her, saying she quite understood what a magnet Tours must be to the impressionable Englishman. "You are wrong," replied the Duchesse, in the same vein of raillery, "if Montagu is here it is because he cannot always be by the side of the angels, and wants to be far enough away from you to remember he is only mortal."

Anne of Austria, usually right in her assumptions regarding the Duchesse, was this time hopelessly wrong. The enchantress, much to Montagu's chagrin and dismay, had transferred her affection from Montagu to his companion, William Crofts, later Lord Crofts.—"Madcap Crofts", to repeat Grammont—seven years younger than Wat, with a not undeserved reputation for being a tremendous lady-killer. In later years it would be his relations with the seductive Duchesse de Châtillon which would arouse gossip, this great lady, who aspired to be Charles II.'s queen, being willing to accept him as lover on condition that he furthered her ambitions.

There was nothing fastidious about these seventeenth century aristocratic plotters. Crofts had been drawn to Tours by the glowing account given him by Montagu of the Duchesse de Chevreuse's beauty, and encouraged by the lady seems to have shown no compunction in taking his friend's place in her affections. But they were not permitted to enjoy each other's company long. He was forced to return to England and she to take refuge in Spain—out of reach of the infuriated Cardinal. Writing from Calais, Crofts bade her believe he often gazed upon her sweet portrait, and as often kissed it.[1]

Disappointed in his sons, the one a Papist and the other a Puritan, the aged Earl of Manchester sought to drown his sorrows in drink. We hear of him through that charming gossip, Lady Dorothy Percy, who has these entertaining bits of news to offer her husband, Lord Leicester, the Ambassador at Paris: "If you desire news for your little Watt [Montagu], you may tell him that his father is drunk every meal, and that his brother Mandeville [the future 2nd Earl of Manchester] is enriched by Sir Nathaniel Rich, who is dead and hath given all his fortune to him."[2]

That after some ten years of secret service work Montagu should be content with the minor post of attaché in Paris argues the presence of some considerable attraction, which may either have been Lord Leicester, one of the most cultured men of the day, or his fascinating daughter, Lady Dorothy Sidney, Waller's *Sacharissa*, then nineteen, and by all accounts most lovely to look upon. Had Montagu been endowed with a little of James Howell's passion for homely letter-writing, what delicious vignettes of life in this gracious household he could have left us! But having neither gift nor taste for correspondence likely to interest posterity, he entirely missed his opportunity.

Even more entertaining than his conversations with Dorothy Sidney would have been his talks with Ben Jonson, Richelieu, Mazarin and de Retz, to name but a few of the remarkable personalities with whom he was destined to mingle. To think that he should not have left behind a

[1] M. Batiffol, in his masterly biography of the Duchesse, quotes several passages from the "Comte de Croft's" love-letters.

[2] *Sacharissa: Some account of Dorothy Sidney*, by Julia Cartwright.

solitary word of Ben Jonson's brazen-throated fulminations, which may well have included revealing allusions to Shakespeare and Donne, is enough to make us weep with rage and annoyance. Almost as mournful to contemplate is his silence regarding Bacon, whom he must often have seen in his father's house, and about whom the old Earl must frequently have talked to him. Instead, he fobbed us off with such ill-digested matter as *Miscellanea Spiritualia* or *Devout Essaies*, first part, 1648, dedicated in the most fulsome language to Henrietta Maria; second part, 1654, dedicated to the Earl of Leicester. Who would guess that the writer had once been famous as a wit and man of fashion? What had happened to extinguish that carnival of the spirit which formerly had made him such welcome company?

Lady Leicester's reference to Lord Mandeville, Wat's elder brother, having been left a fortune will not puzzle the reader who remembers that the much-marrying Puritan had already begun his siege of the Rich [Earl of Warwick] family, to whom the Sidneys were also related.

The old Earl and his Papist son were soon reconciled. Writing to Lord Conway on July 27th, 1637, James Howell remarks, "All the news I can tell you is that my Lord Privy Seal came last Sunday to court in a fine apes coat to take his leave of the king and queen, and his son Watt, pretending to show him the house, which I will undertake that not of a long time seen so proper a squire and so comely clad."[1]

Alas! there was to be no peace for the sorely tried old man, miserable despite his wealth and abundant honours. A new indiscretion on the part of his wayward son, necessitating his temporary withdrawal from England, caused him the utmost sorrow and embarrassment. Since his conversion Montagu had actively co-operated in the project to unite the two churches sponsored by the Pope, and furthered by his able nephew, Cardinal Barberini, self-acclaimed Protector of England. For the first time since the Reformation, England and Rome were being linked by a reciprocal agency, and zealots like Sir Tobie Matthew,[2] Charles's "prittie littel Tobie", were multiplying their energies behind the scenes, encouraged by the perilous subservience of the now uxorious king to Henrietta Maria. That lady, who was never to learn prudence, assembled the numerous fashionable converts to Rome at an imposing Christmas Eve service, of which George Con, a Scotsman, who since July, 1636 had represented the Vatican in this country, was in his exuberant joy to remark, "such a concourse had seldom been seen."

In his despatches to the Vatican,[3] Panzani, his predecessor, and Cardinal Barberini, in personal talks with Mazarin, then Papal Nuncio in Paris, had stressed Montagu's importance as an instrument of Papal policy. But incensed at the numerous apostasies which he put down to the machinations of Montagu and Matthew, whose activities were becoming ever more audacious, Archbishop Laud told the king that the time for action had

[1] *Strafford Papers*, Vol. II. At the 'Varsity the Earl had the reputation of being a great one for fine clothes.

[2] Sir Tobie Matthew, son of a notable Archbishop of York, was a great friend of Bacon. He is credited by some with a considerable share in the conversion of Montagu.

[3] Quoted by Mrs. Everett Green in *Letters of Henrietta Maria*.

come,[1] and at a memorable session held on October 22nd, 1637, Charles, who had hitherto been held back by his wife's representations, violently denounced the mischievous pair. Montagu, according to what Lord Conway told Strafford,[2] received such a fright that he kept his chamber much longer than his indisposition warranted. On his recovery he deemed it wise to make tracks again for Rome, where he was to meet with even more flattering hospitality than before, being accommodated in a noble apartment in the Chancellor's palace. Only his modesty, declare the Papal records, restrained the Vatican authorities from adding further extravagant marks of affection and respect. On the sacrament of confirmation being administered to him, Cardinal Barberini, in token of admiration, stood as godfather.

Agreeable to Henrietta Maria's instructions, he pressed the claims of Con for promotion. That occasionally breezy Scotsman, irked by the Earl of Denbigh's zeal in putting his lovely daughter, the Marchioness of Hamilton, out of the reach of the conversionists, had dubbed him "a Puritan Ass!"[3]

Thinking it safe to return, Montagu, well pleased with himself, resumed his place in the queen's household. Among the first of his duties was to welcome on behalf of the royal family the Duchesse de Chevreuse, who, to escape Spanish boredom, had landed on these shores. He had not dreamed that twice within a year it would be his lot to meet the well-beloved lady. After what had happened at Tours, any further display of tenderness on their part was out of the question, but he was glad to see her, if only to get her views on Richelieu's latest move, a warning to Anne of Austria to have nothing to do with the dangerous Englishman.

Pennant, in his *Journey to the Isle of Wight*, mentions the Duchesse as having in a frolic swum across the Thames, somewhere, as he supposes, in the vicinity of Windsor. He was sufficiently amused by verses made on the occasion by a Sir J. M. [probably Sir John Mennes, author of the *Musarum Deliciae*], who entirely mistook the lady's character, to reprint them:

> But her chaste breast, cold as the cloyster'd nun
> Whose frost to chrystal might congeal the sun,
> So glaz'd the stream, that pilots, there afloat
> Thought they might safely land without a boat;
> July had seen the Thames in ice involved,
> Had it not been by her own beams dissolved.
>
> . . . . . .

For one inclined as was Montagu in his present state of religious exaltation to go off at a tangent, to be ruled by such a mistress as Henrietta Maria, who lacked judgment and discretion and was for ever doing the wrong thing, was a grave misfortune. Had she possessed the slightest knowledge of national character, she would have recognised how foolhardy were the risks he was running for her sake, as for example when with her tacit approval, if not indeed at her suggestion, he appealed to the Catholics to finance the king's struggle with the Scots, who had refused to accept

[1] Heyllyn's *Life and Death of Archbishop Laud.*
[2] *Strafford Papers*, Vol. II.
[3] *Life and Letters of Endymion Porter*, by Dorothea Townshend.

Charles's English prayer-book. If that was not running his head into a noose, it would be hard to say what was.

Nor was his plea, that in no better way could the Catholics testify to their gratitude to the queen for the efforts she had made on their behalf, calculated to render him any less obnoxious to the Puritan House of Commons. The Catholics subscribed £20,000, and might have subscribed more, had not the old Catholic families regarded him as a pushful *arriviste* whose activities smelt of presumptuousness.

Action against Montagu when it came was swift and decisive. On March 16th, 1640, Parliament petitioned the king to remove all Popish recusants from Court, in particular Mr. Montagu, Sir Kenelm Digby and Sir Tobie Matthew. This step they followed up by calling on Montagu to account for his appeal to the Catholics. So ugly was the temper of the House of Commons that the queen, being herself inculpated, was for once in her life really frightened, and to appease Parliament agreed to Montagu being banished.

That he might not lack for a friend at Court—he was going to France—she gave him a letter to the Comte de Chavigny, a *protégé* of Richelieu and later Secretary of State under Louis XIV.: "Forced to retire into France for some time," she wrote, "M. de Montagu will have need of your favour, which I hope you will not withhold from him, since he suffers for as good a cause as that of his religion, and also for being too affectionate to me, of which I am so sensible that I cannot do otherwise than recommend him to you most carefully."[1]

It was useless appealing to Richelieu, for he would not help her, a daughter of the royal house of France, let alone Montagu, caring naught for royal relationships, and secretly delighted at every fresh sign of internal disruption in England, a weak cross-channel neighbour being one of the aims of his cynical foreign policy. When she suggested coming to France for a change of air and a course of Spa treatment, he replied that a visit from her at such a juncture was wholly inadvisable.

Once in France and in close touch with Anne of Austria, Montagu did his best to work up sympathy for the king and queen of England, "persecuted" by the Puritans and Parliament. He maintained a constant, though secret, correspondence with Father Robert Philips, the Jesuit who was the queen's principal Confessor; but the Parliamentary agents were watchful, and on June 25th, 1641, stern-minded John Pym produced in the House of Commons an intercepted letter from Philips to his friend Wat. A truly human document, it did more credit to the Father Confessor's heart than to his head. Had he been as astute as the situation demanded, he would never have trusted a letter so frankly worded to the hazards of a courier service. After a lamentable complaint of the times and present state of affairs, it continued: "The good king and queen are left very naked; the Puritans, if they durst, would pull the good queen to pieces. Can the good king of France suffer a daughter of France and her children to be thus affronted? . . . A stirring, active ambassador might do good service here."[2]

A second letter, similarly seized, bore on Montagu's personal circum-

[1] *Letters of Henrietta Maria.*
[2] *Foley Records.*

stances: "I send you some money by Mr. Jermyn, but now that he has gone I make some doubt whether he might be mindful of you to take it with him. I have spoken to the queen about your occasions, and will do what I can, though I am not able to undertake much.—Your loving friend, Father Philips."[1]

Courage rather than tact was the keynote of the worthy Father's character. On the oath being administered by the official examiners after his arrest, he "absurdly pulled away his hand from the book" [we are quoting Clarendon] "and said it was no true Bible, for which he was deservedly committed." His impeachment by Parliament followed on November 2nd, 1641, the charge being that he had allowed himself to be much ruled by Sir Tobie Matthew, Montagu and others, and had attempted to traduce the tender years of the Prince [Charles II.] to Popery. Though at one time he looked to be in great danger, he was on the intercession of the queen released from the Tower and allowed to return to Somerset House.

That same November the vigilant Commons intercepted some letters that had passed between Crofts and the Duchesse de Chevreuse.[2] He was declared by the Committee of Parliament sitting at Grocers' Hall to be a person of vile character and an enemy to liberty.

. . . . . .

The death first of Richelieu [December 4th, 1642] and then of Louis XIII. [May 14th, 1643] dramatically altered Montagu's prospects for the better. In the queen-mother, Anne of Austria, appointed Regent, he had a powerful friend ready to repay the debt of which she had ever remained mindful. Her manner, perhaps more than her words, led him to believe that at her hands he could confidently expect the highest honours. Meanwhile, as an expression of her trust in him, she invited his counsel on several pressing issues, of which easily the most important was her future relations with Mazarin, whom Louis, having the poorest opinion of his wife's intelligence and political sense, had cast for the rôle of being the real and effective ruler of France. But as things turned out, only through the queen-regent's favour could the Cardinal maintain himself in office, so great was the opposition he encountered. The nobles, who had been hostile to Richelieu, were equally antagonistic to his successor, while the populace, remembering only that he was a foreigner, hated and distrusted him.

It is clear from contemporary memoirs, especially those of Mme. de Motteville, the queen's confidant, that Anne of Austria was in two minds whether or not to accept the unctuous professions of devotion made by Mazarin. In her forty-third year and fully seasoned to political artifice, she was possibly more wary of flowery speeches than those paying court to her suspected. Certainly she was unprepared at first to take at their face value the endearing remarks of the wily Cardinal, who strove to win not only her confidence but her affection, fortified by the knowledge that in introducing him, Richelieu had remarked (if tradition is to be believed), "Madame, you will like him much; he has Buckingham's air!" Nevertheless, it might have gone hard with him had not Montagu assured her

[1] *Foley Records.* [2] *Nicholas Papers.*

that in all things Mazarin was the opposite of Richelieu whose memory she execrated. In inviting the queen to trust the Cardinal, Montagu was quite sincere, believing him to be wholly indispensable to France in this hour of her destiny.

If Mazarin had been capable of normal feelings of decency, and had not entirely been swayed by stark motives of expediency, he would have been deeply grateful to Montagu, and endeavoured to show it at every turn. Unfortunately, when it came to determining any particular action, neither by him nor his predecessor Richelieu was gratitude allowed to become an active force. Mazarin would have thought himself crazy ever to give way to kindly sentiment, particularly in the case of this Englishman, whose standing with the queen-regent was much too close to suit his book. His jealousy was destined almost to the end to shape his attitude to Montagu. As a result, even when no strain on his patriotic feelings was involved, nor any question of his duty to France at issue, he would hum and haw about doing Montagu the slightest service. But he was no kindlier disposed towards the unfortunate king of England, saying, when hard pressed by Montagu, that it rested with Charles, and not with a Minister of France, to define how he could best be helped. That was all very well if reasonably safe means of communication with Charles had existed, but as recently as March of that year [1643] a letter of the king's in cypher to Montagu had been intercepted in Bedfordshire. The English Parliament agents were no fools.

The French queen was as reassuring as Mazarin was discouraging. She could not forget that Henrietta Maria was a daughter of France, and in case of emergency was prepared to find her a suitable home in Paris, with sufficient money to keep it up. The English queen was duly appreciative, but thought it just as well to keep in with Mazarin. She had heard from Montagu, she wrote him, how ready he was to serve her, an over-statement which must have caused the Cardinal much cynical amusement.

Meanwhile, as inevitable as destiny, the irrepressible Duchesse de Chevreuse had bobbed up again. Now in her forty-fourth year and somewhat *passée*, she was desirous of returning to Paris after an exile lasting ten years. Strangely enough, Mazarin, who might be supposed to oppose the idea, favoured it, whereas the queen-mother, whose approval might seem a foregone conclusion, was definitely hostile to the idea. She had, she argued, enough troubles on her hands without adding to them by the presence in her midst of such a stormy petrel as her once bosom-friend. The Cardinal, struggling with a host of enemies, took the view that, given the opportunity of attaching the Duchesse to his side, he would be mad not to take it, and accordingly charged Montagu with the task of settling terms for her home-coming. If he (Mazarin) could genuinely count on her benevolent support, she might re-enter Paris, and start afresh with all her debts paid.

Montagu agreed to meet her in Brussels. He needed her support for England just as much as Mazarin needed it for France. Under her lead France might be roused into actively championing the cause of the king and queen of England. So far as promises went, Montagu succeeded to the

limit of his expectations. To everything that was asked of her the Duchesse answered " yes ". At the moment she saw no advantage in annoying Mazarin, and the warm regard she had for Charles and Henrietta Maria made her sincerely anxious to help them. For the present she was ready to behave herself, but what might happen in the future was for circumstances to determine. She had not committed herself beyond a certain point.

How coldly the two former lovers reacted to each other that summer of 1643[1] may be gathered from one significant incident. She wanted the position of Chancellor of France, held by Pierre Séguier, for an old admirer, who by reason of being mixed up in her intrigues had fallen into disgrace ; but both Anne of Austria and Montagu frowned on the proposed change, having the highest regard for Séguier's sister Jeanne, the venerable Abbess of the Carmelites, Pontoise. Consequently, the Duchesse's pouts and smiles were to be so much wasted effort. However, she was far too clever, and certainly far too proud, to show pique, or to let her former lover know that she guessed him to be the " real villain of the piece ". If it irked her to think that once he would not have dared to refuse her anything she revealed it neither in her manner nor in her voice, and they parted, outwardly at least, on the best of terms. She, as much as he, realised that they had reached that unflattering stage in their relations when they could afford, indeed were compelled, to view each other objectively. So far as it suited their plans and ambitions they would continue to be mutually helpful, uninfluenced by the fact that in any passionate sense their intimacy was dead. Nothing that could happen in the future had power to deprive them of their memories. As for the woman who had stood unmoved at the grave of so many withered romances, if ever she recalled those hours of sweet madness at Nancy, it was to share the sadness expressed in Sappho's glorious line :

Yea, verily, I loved thee well, Atthis, once long time ago.

With the exception of the Brussels reunion, the extraordinary pair of plotters were not fated to meet again for six years. While she would be pursuing with undimmed ardour her interminable intrigues, he would be chafing under his enforced stay in the Tower of London, whose amenities, no doubt, compared unfavourably with those he had enjoyed at the Bastille sixteen years previously.

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Of Montagu's royalist activities, a grave matter of concern to the Parliament forces, we catch sundry glimpses in the correspondence of Henrietta Maria. The English queen's movements being uncertain, he addressed her from France, care of the king. One of his letters was inadvertently opened by His Majesty, for which piece of carelessness, Charles, whose fine manners never deserted him, meekly apologised. The queen wrote back : " 14th May, 1643. As to [the] excuses you make for opening my letters of [from]

[1] The Duchesse. escorted by Montagu, reached Paris on June 14th, 1643, having made a triumphal journey from Roye.

Wat Montagu, I am offended you should believe I have any secret from you that I would not tell you." When she said that, was she being entirely sincere ? Had she not already under contemplation flight from England ? Otherwise how explain Montagu's eagerness in the succeeding months to reach her at all costs !

There being no way of his re-entering England save by subterfuge, he planned to pass himself off as a member of the suite of the Comte d'Harcourt, the French Ambassador, who was coming over to explore the practicability of mediation between the Royalist and Parliamentary forces. When he elected to take the risk, Montagu can have had little conception of the trouble he had stirred up. On top of the king's intercepted correspondence had come Prynne's so-called revelations, "Rome's masterpiece, or the Grand conspiracy of the Pope and his jesuited instruments to re-establish Popery." As its main feature this erudite but forbidding concoction boasted the letter sent to Laud by Sir William Boswell, our agent at The Hague, detailing a plot (unearthed by one Andreas ab Habernfeld, whose informant was alleged to be a servant of Con) to foment civil war in England, and under cover of the internal commotion to re-establish Popery. The motives of the leaders of the conspiracy, Montagu included, were described as the desire for high political office, or election to the College of Cardinals where sixteen vacancies existed.

The letter, casually found by Prynne among Laud's papers, had been taken seriously by the House of Commons, who on May 11th, 1643, had ordered it to be printed. That there was ever such a crazy plot is wholly unlikely. At the worst the information passed on by Boswell was no more than a distorted version of the project to reunite the two Churches. But Parliament was in a highly suspicious mood. On all sides signs of a strong Catholic reaction were multiplying. The moves of the queen and her friends pointed to some concerted understanding. Consequently little mercy could be expected by such plotters as fell into the hands of the Puritan House of Commons, least of all by Montagu, most dangerous of all conspirators, who at the beginning of October landed in England again.

At first luck favoured him : he reached Rochester without being challenged. Here, however, he came under the scrutiny of Captain Lee, a zealous officer, who lined up the Ambassador's party for individual inspection. Montagu, clumsily dressed, his face besmutched and his periwig palpably too heavy for his head, immediately aroused suspicion. Sensing his danger, he attempted to make off, but was stopped. Regarding further pretence as useless, he owned up to his real identity ; whereupon he was taken with all speed to London, and on October 9th, 1643, lodged in the Tower. The Ambassador protested at the "unseemly outrage", and, in addition, appealed to Wat's Puritan brother, the 2nd Earl of Manchester [the old Earl had died the previous year], but all in vain. Clarendon suggests that in these attempts to get Montagu released, Harcourt was none too sincere, regarding him as an awkward encumbrance. In Montagu's possession were found incriminating letters marked with the royal arms of France, and addressed to the king and queen. According to the newspaper, *The Perfect Diurnall*, the return of this grand Jesuited Papist for interviews

with both their Majesties afforded clear evidence to all the world of the great Catholic design for this country.

Much as she deplored Montagu's arrest, the queen felt in no position to help him, as might be gathered from her plaintive little note to the Marquis of Newcastle, and with the Earl of Manchester unwilling or unable to intervene, Montagu, closely confined, languished in the Tower. On February 9th, 1644, to mark their sense of the enormity of his offence, the Commons ordered all his goods to be seized and sold for the use of the forces under Lord Fairfax.

Thankful to have escaped with his life, Montagu sought distraction in the composition of his first book of "devout Essaies". He also engaged in a religious disputation with the Puritan fanatic, Dr. John Bastwick, who for insulting references to the Bishops, "enemies of God and the tail of the beast", had suffered the indignity of having his ears cropped. As time went by, Parliament, possibly out of deference to the Earl of Manchester, heeded Montagu's plea that he was greatly suffering in health from being shut up in the Tower, and needed Spa treatment. As from the summer of 1647 he was put on parole and allowed to pay periodic visits to Tunbridge Wells to drink the waters. Furthermore, on December 15th that same year he was permitted to write to Mazarin, whom he reproached in bitter terms for neglecting a college in France in which he [Montagu] was particularly interested. He believed, was his sarcastic comment, that the Cardinal's affection for him was still alive, but the external evidence was not very obvious.

By some undisclosed means, Montagu the following year got into touch with the king, a prisoner in Carisbrooke Castle, Isle of Wight, and to assist in his escape (a fruitless project as it turned out) got Lord Brudenell, in return for the royal promise of an earldom, to put up £1,000. This promise Charles II. was duly to carry out. The loyal peer's descendant, George Brudenell, 4th Earl of Cardigan, ended up Duke of Montagu [new creation], having married Mary, youngest daughter of John, 2nd Duke of Montagu. It could thus be said that a male Montagu paved the way of the Brudenells to an earldom and a female Montagu to a dukedom.

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Eight months after the execution of the king he had vainly tried to save, i.e., on August 31st, 1649, Montagu was conditionally released from the Tower. He was to leave England within ten days, death and confiscation of his estates to follow if he dared to return, a contingency which there was little reason to apprehend. With few exceptions, the prospects for all known royalists were as gloomy as they could possibly be. His own kindred, as a result of the Civil War, had fared none too well. His cousin, the future Earl of Sandwich, a man of great courage, remained with the popular side, though careful to keep apart from the regicides; his brother, the much-marrying 2nd Earl of Manchester, having opposed the bringing of the king to trial, had discreetly retired into the background; his uncle, the 1st Lord Montagu of Boughton, had died a prisoner of the Parliamentarians; the successor to the title, the 2nd Baron, remained physically

in a state of suspended animation. And of all his relatives only his brother promised, or was willing, to be helpful; he would look after his small patrimony and forward on the rents.

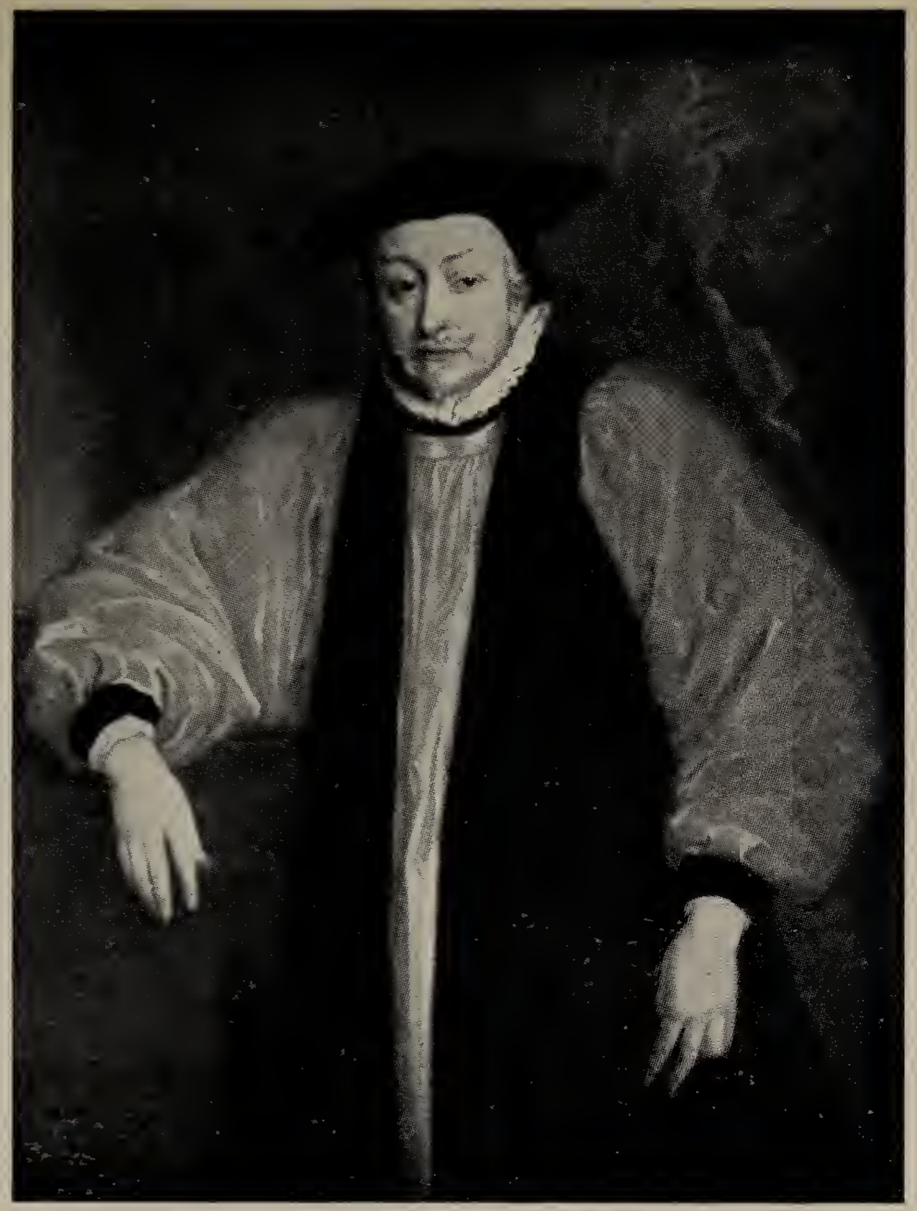
It was a sedate, chastened, middle-aged Wat Montagu—he was forty-five—as little like the boon comrade of Tom Carew (dead these many years) as it was possible to imagine, who arrived in Paris, to find, not as he expected, peaceful settled conditions, but turmoil and disorder. Civil war raged furiously. The *Fronde* of the Parliament had been succeeded by the *Fronde* of the nobility, with the Duchesse de Chevreuse well to the fore, though the distinction of being the prime intriguer of the day was being wrested from her by a similarly brilliant and ebullient figure, Jean François Paul de Gondi, the future Cardinal de Retz, comparable because of his anti-monarchical sympathies with the 1st Earl of Shaftesbury or Algernon Sidney, who would add his own colourful contribution to Montagu's eventful career. The second *Fronde* threatened the downfall of Anne of Austria and Mazarin alike, but both managed to survive and turn the tables on their enemies, de Retz included.

When the queen-mother, taking Louis XIV. with her, fled from Paris to St. Germains, Henrietta Maria, who since 1644 had found refuge in France, preferred to remain in her apartments in the Louvre, and though among servitors she could trust, felt safer with Montagu by her side again. Her circumstances were the reverse of reassuring, the pension arranged by Mazarin not having been paid for months. Indeed, had it not been for the energetic representations of Gondi, who induced the *Parlement* to advance her the sum of 40,000 livres, she would have been in dire straits. When in January, 1649, he called on the English queen to pay his respects, he found the apartments without fire or wood, no money available to buy fuel, and buying on credit out of the question. Little Henriette-Anne, the future Duchesse d'Orléans, still lay in bed, the only place where she could hope to keep warm that bitter winter. Never had it occurred to Gondi, however topsy-turvy conditions were in Paris, that the granddaughter of Henri Quatre could be reduced to such a pass.

Preparatory to making a career for himself in France, Montagu became a naturalised priest, and by the interest of the queen-mother of France was first made Abbot of Nanteuil monastery, a Benedictine establishment in the diocese of Metz, and then Abbot of the rich Abbey of St. Martin's, near Pontoise. Meanwhile his brother, the 2nd Earl of Manchester, who had already been called upon to meet several accounts left unpaid when he fled from England, was being pressed to pay others which the Abbot disputed. As he had no wish to see his small estate at Keiston, Hampshire, engulfed, he invoked Mazarin's influence with Cromwell, to the end that the Earl should not be further harassed by his [Wat's] creditors, real or doubtful.[1]

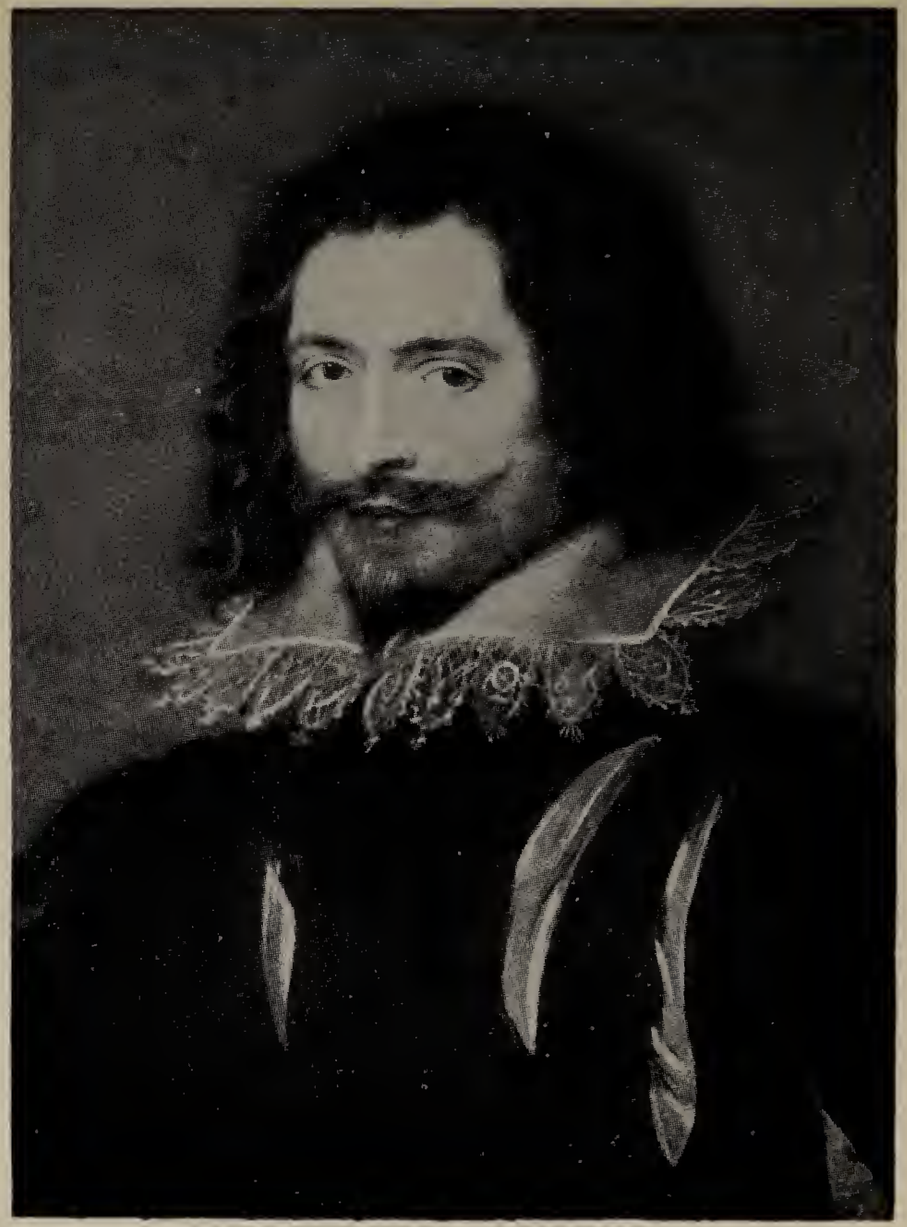
Among the first of his old friends to write to him was Lord Leicester, who threw chief blame for Charles's death on Cromwell, and spoke bitterly of the tyrannous acts passed by the new Government. "It is not now," he went on, "as it was when there was no king in Israel, for instead of every man doing what is right in his own eyes, there is neither freedom of

[1] *Clarendon State Papers*, Vol. IV.



WILLIAM LAUD, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

(From the portrait after Van Dyck in the library of St. John's College, Oxford)



GEORGE VILLIERS, 1ST DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM

(After the portrait by Rubens in the Pitti Palace, Florence)

[*By courtesy of the Earl of Sandwich*

EDWARD, 1ST EARL OF SANDWICH

(After the portrait by Sir Peter Lely)

action nor of speech",[1] sentiments of which he was sure Montagu would readily approve.

On the death in 1650 of the more prudent and less dictatorial Father Philips, which occasioned Henrietta Maria much sorrow, Montagu became her sole spiritual adviser.[2] Henceforth he shared with Jermyn the responsibility of making up the queen's mind for her. That they agreed on most issues rendered their combination as dangerous as it was formidable. To the intelligence and fanatical energy of the one was united the worldly shrewdness of the other, hidden behind a deceptive façade of agreeable manners and easy bearing. Montagu was usually the cleverer talker, but Jermyn, bland and oleaginous, the more persuasive bargainer. Clarendon did not exaggerate when he described the queen's new spiritual director as having a singular dexterity in his nature and adorned with excellent parts.

Molière alone could hope to do justice to the close companionship of the rake and reformed rake, the one the reputed lover—some say husband—of Henrietta Maria, the other the reverend Father, to whom she confessed her sins, busy completing the second instalment of his "Devout Essaies". The combination, it should be added, had its counterpart in the French court, where the principals in the comedy of sin and remission of sin were Anne of Austria and Mazarin the man, and Mazarin the Cardinal.[3] We do not pretend to understand how the now pious monk reconciled himself to these regrettable manifestations of human frailty. Possibly, compared with the weighty issues at stake, they were of trivial significance. In the long perspective, how small was the shadow cast by Anne of Austria, Mazarin, Henrietta Maria, Jermyn, and, least of all, himself! The one great reality transcending everything else was the Catholic Church and its continuous enlargement, including the reconciliation with England, his sworn goal.

He still dreamt of becoming a Cardinal and thus of more substantially serving his adopted Church, his hopes based on the interest he commanded with the two queens. In his flights of fancy he saw himself a great statesman-ecclesiastic like Richelieu or Mazarin, though how the transformation was to be effected he never stopped to think. His instinct, as much as his reason, persuaded him to defer to Mazarin, who viewed him coldly, and though to be over-considerate of the Cardinal's feelings often hurt his pride, he submitted to the necessary discipline in the belief that it was good policy. Yet he preferred to deal with Mazarin rather than with Charles II., who openly and derisively pooh-poohed nine-tenths of the suggestions emanating from his mother's court and regarded her spiritual adviser as the queen's evil genius. However, for Henrietta Maria's sake, Montagu swallowed Charles's insults and went on planning for the Restoration.

In agreement with the queen-mother he strove to arrange a rich marriage for the penniless king. The bride he had in mind for Charles was the great French heiress, La Grande Mademoiselle, granddaughter of Henri Quatre and niece of Henrietta Maria. The king was not very interested, and

[1] *Sacharissa*, by Mrs. Julia Cartwright.
[2] Officially he was known as her Almoner.
[3] Mazarin and Anne of Austria are said to have married.

showed his indifference in a certain languor which made a bad impression on his proud cousin. As a result the proposed match fell through. He returned to his commonplace mistresses, and she looked for someone who, when talking to her, refrained from yawning.

There had for some time been living in Paris Thomas Hobbes, the political philosopher, whose masterpiece, *The Leviathan*, inspired by his abhorrence of the feuds caused by sectarian fanaticism, had been published in 1651.[1] He had been engaged to teach Charles, when Prince of Wales, the elements of mathematics, but in the end his open-mindedness revolted the king's advisers, notably the Marquis of Ormonde, who, accusing him of atheism and disloyalty, forbade him the Court. Montagu appears to have largely inspired this ungenerous treatment of the mild and timid scholar. Writing to Hyde [Clarendon] soon after the event, Sir Edward Nicholas [Secretary of State to Charles II.] remarked, "I hear that Wat Montagu and other Papists (to the shame of the true Protestants) were the chief cause [that] that grand atheist [Hobbes] was sent away [from court]. Some say that the Marquis of Ormonde was very slow in signifying the king's command to Hobbes to forbear coming to Court, which I am confident is not true, though several persons affirm it." Nicholas spoke of Hobbes as "that father of atheists, who, it is said, hath rendered all the queen's court, and very many of the Duke of York's family, atheists."

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His intellectual energies contracted into a narrow channel, Montagu had grown extremely intolerant of all who ventured to differ from him in religious and political opinions. They were the enemies not only of his Church but of the rightful sovereign of England, and to persecute them was God's work. Having driven Hobbes from Paris, he turned his attention to that equally inoffensive gentleman, Dr. John Cosin [afterwards Bishop of Durham]. Holding the Protestant service conducted by Cosin for the benefit of the Anglicans in Henrietta Maria's household to be an abomination, he persuaded Anne of Austria, who agreed with most things he said,[2] to put a stop to it. Hyde, Charles's Chancellor, raised the issue with the queen-mother, who suggested he should confer with Montagu, "whose bigotry in his new religion had contributed much to the ban." The sense of grievance under which her faithful Protestant servants laboured, made her all the more regret the death of Father Philips, who, happily for all concerned, had lacked the "busy temper, spiritual pride and furious zeal"[3] of his successor.

Having completely upset Henrietta Maria's entourage, Montagu next turned his attention to Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, who, released from Carisbrooke Castle in February, 1653, and attended by his Protestant tutor, Richard Lovell, had rejoined his mother (he was the youngest son) in Paris. Giving a foretaste of his intentions, Montagu preached at the

[1] "The Puritan Rebellion sets Hobbes searching for the formula of social peace."—*A Grammar of Politics*, by Harold J. Laski.

[2] "Montagu had great power with the queen-regent."—Clarendon.

[3] Carte's *Life of Ormonde*, Vol. III, 1851 Edition.

English nunnery, and, says Lovell in a letter to Nicholas, was heard by most in the queen-mother's Court. Notwithstanding all his wit and eloquence, he (Lovell) had returned without the least prejudice to his own religion or inclination to Montagu's.[1]

Though Prince Henry, not yet thirteen and of a sweet and manly disposition, seemed an easy target for Montagu's conversionist activities, in practice he proved entirely the reverse. Drawing strength from the instructions given him by his father, the late king, and his brother, the present king, he remained wholly invulnerable to the insidious propaganda put forth by the Abbot and his mother alike. Henrietta Maria, in seeking to cajole him, went back on her promise[2] not to interfere with his religion. However, she would have required to be a woman of immense strength of character to withstand the furious fanaticism of her Father Confessor, bent on rescuing souls from the pit of heresy. He induced her to put the Prince under his charge at Pontoise, ostensibly to wean him from the company of undesirable French gallants. H.R.H., who supposedly came as an honoured guest, found on arrival such well-known *habitués* of his mother's Court as Jermyn, Lord Gerard and Sir John Berkeley.[3] The company much appreciated the host's generous table and greatly admired his silver-plate, charming furniture and works of art. Some of the pictures had been acquired from the widowed 1st Duchess of Buckingham, who, being in straits owing to the non-payment of £50,000 lent to the Crown by her late husband, had been obliged to sell a portion of her matchless possessions.

At first, Montagu's tactics were to engage the boy's self-interest. A Cardinal's cap and a handsome income would, he told him, eventually follow his conversion to Rome, which never failed to reward her favourite sons. On the Prince's return home, Henrietta Maria appealed to his feelings as a son not to disappoint her hopes, all centred in his being of her religion. Anne of Austria and Mazarin joined their own to the voices calling for his apostasy. As he still refused to give way, his mother adopted a harsher tone. She had taken his dead father's place and had a right, she claimed, to expect from him implicit obedience in all things.

But Prince Henry was not to be coerced. Exasperated at the non-success of the prolonged campaign, Montagu so far lost control of himself as to reprove the boy for coming into the house untidy. To escape what was tantamount to persecution, the Prince, after expressing the hope that he might never meet Montagu again, took refuge with Lord Hatton [married to Elizabeth Montagu, the Abbot's first cousin] who looked upon his relative as a dangerous renegade. There he remained until the Marquis of Ormonde raised sufficient money to take him to Charles in Cologne.

This disagreeable setback led the Abbot to take stock of his position, which was scarcely on the upgrade. The Restoration, the unification of the two Churches, the Red Hat, on all of which he had set his heart, seemed no nearer accomplishment, nor could the solid bond existing between

[1] *Nicholas Papers*, Vol. I.
[2] Promise made to Charles II.
[3] His life is narrated in *The Berkeleys of Berkeley Square*, by the present writer.

Mazarin and Cromwell, the Cardinal's "very affectionate friend", be regarded as a happy augury for the future. Mazarin continued unctuously polite, but his actions belied his words. Nothing could be got from him. In respect to Charles, his attitude when not decidedly unfriendly was frigidly non-committal. He had still to be convinced the Restoration was to France's interest.

Private sorrows, as much as the queen-mother's despairing utterances, helped to keep Montagu's spirits low. He was much affected by the death on October 13th, 1655, of Sir Tobie Matthew, whose fanatical zeal he had largely copied. Yet however much he liked the old man, he can scarcely have relished the charge bequeathed him in his will—that of preparing all his religious writings for the press. Matthew, according to Suckling, was one always "whispering nothing in somebody's ear".[1] Of far greater concern to Montagu was the dislike, amounting to hatred, in which he was held by Charles's personal followers. In their eyes he was the source and fountain head of all the dissension between the king and his mother. "If the king would but once frown on Lord Jermyn and your cousin Watt," wrote Nicholas to Hatton, "you should see all the Louvre [where Henrietta Maria lived] creep upon their bellies to him." This course, added the plain-spoken statesman, the king might pursue without infringement of filial duty. Assured that he could depend on the queen-mother, Montagu, who had all the family courage, hit back to some purpose, freely and openly criticising the king for the failure of the Restoration movement, in particular the fiasco of the royalist rising in 1655. What he heard of Charles's vagabondish life only made him more contemptuous of the king, whom he thought an unworthy son of a worthy mother.

That year talk of his being sent to Rome as Henrietta's special envoy temporarily revived Montagu's hopes. There were several issues affecting English and Irish Catholics which urgently called for decision, but the project, clearly designed to promote his advancement, fell through like so many schemes intended to benefit him.

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With Cromwell's death in the autumn of 1658, the Stuart cause took a marked turn for the better, but until he had satisfied himself that England wanted Charles back, Mazarin would not move a finger on his behalf. He was not going to jeopardise France's relations with England by supporting forlorn hopes, nor without good cause would he abandon the policy, inherited from Richelieu, of keeping England weak by encouraging internal strife. Benign considerations played no part in Mazarin's calculations.

Both Charles and his mother realised that if the Cardinal were to be won over, it would only be through Montagu, and with their tacit consent he took charge of the complicated manœuvres designed to draw Mazarin in on Charles's side. He even instructed the king how to address the Cardinal. Royalists, who the previous year had been hurling all manner of insults at his head, were now prepared to eat out of his hand. Even great-hearted Ormonde, who, angered by the attempts to traduce Prince

[1] *Sessions of the Poets.*

Henry, had called the Abbot everything that was disagreeable, now hailed him as the possible saviour of the Stuarts.

No man, in those fateful spring, summer and autumn months of 1659, could have worked harder for the Restoration than Montagu. One day at Pontoise he would be discussing with Henrietta Maria some possibly new approach to Mazarin ; another day he would be racing to Toulouse to meet Charles. But each and every day he kept to an appointed routine ; he bombarded Mazarin with letters or personal calls. Bewildered by such energy, the Cardinal complained to Turenne that there were no limits to the Abbot's importunities.[1] However, the minister still held aloof from the Restoration movement, avoiding any conversation with Charles, even when the king came expressly to the Pyrenees to see him. The talk of French money and troops to help to set Charles on the throne was so much eyewash.

But with or without the Cardinal's help, the king's advisers thought the Restoration could be accomplished, especially if all the Montagues pulled together, not omitting the future Earl of Sandwich, who was in charge of the Fleet. Could he but persuade his cousin to declare for the king, so Hyde wrote the Abbot, the situation would be saved, the king enabled to land in England, and the country delivered from the misery of contending factions.[2] As events turned out, it was another Montagu, Edward, eldest son of the 2nd Lord Montagu of Boughton, who, as bearer of a special appeal from Charles, was to be the means of bringing the Commander of the Fleet over to the Royalist cause.

Ever fertile in expedients, Montagu suggested to Charles that perhaps the surest way of gaining Mazarin's adherence was to marry his niece, the beautiful twelve-year-old Hortense Mancini, even at that age a voluptuous creature, but the Cardinal, when sounded on the subject, refused to take the idea seriously. He was scarcely in a mood to view with favour anything proposed by Charles, since he suspected him of trafficking with his mortal enemy, de Retz. That remarkable insurgent, a proven friend of the Stuarts, had, following his anti-government activities in France, been locked up as a national danger, but had managed to escape ; since when he had contrived to contact Charles on several occasions. Witty, cynical, cultured, roguish, immoral, unprincipled, he represented the type of adventurer whom the king could never resist.

Charles, who regarded the truth as too precious a luxury to be extravagantly used, naturally denied having had any business with de Retz, and as an earnest of good conduct pledged himself, through Montagu, wholly to follow Mazarin's advice ; which pledge did not stand in the way of his meeting de Retz the following month, this time at The Hague. Montagu managed to appease Mazarin's ruffled feelings, and from the almost empty French coffers 100,000 *écus* were scraped together for Charles's use, though, when handing them over, the Cardinal warned the Abbot that they were not to be used unless circumstances justified it.

The suggestion of French or foreign participation in the Restoration being likely to upset English opinion, Charles, on the recommendation of Monk

[1] September 8th, 1659. *France sous Mazarin*, by Chéruel.
[2] *Clarendon State Papers*, Vol. IV.

preparing his bloodless *coup d'état*, agreed not to remain either on French or Spanish soil.[1] Accordingly he moved to Breda in Holland, where his sister Mary, Princess of Orange, provided him with quarters. While there he learnt that all had gone well; his restoration was an accomplished fact.

With Charles on the throne and Hyde as Chancellor, the Abbot's importance, so far as high politics were concerned, temporarily waned, for, as he admitted to Mazarin, the queen-mother's Court had ceased to exercise any influence over affairs in England. Chagrined at having done so little to aid the English king, the Cardinal visited his spleen on Montagu, whom he accused of inept advice. Montagu, it seems, had belittled the suggestion that Louis ought without delay to congratulate Charles on his restoration, urging that etiquette demanded the king should first notify the French monarch of his changed fortune.

From that moment Mazarin began to treat him and the whole of Henrietta Maria's entourage as noisy but insignificant intriguers. In his view the Abbot, whom he still regarded with jealous dislike,[2] was wholly given over to chimeras,[3] of which the two craziest were the idea that Hyde could be displaced and the queen-mother made the real power in England, and the belief that England could easily be won over to Romanism. He felt obliged to warn him against reviving the project for marrying his rich niece to Charles, a much more attractive proposition now that he was king. Nevertheless, almost the first thing Montagu did on arrival in England with the queen-mother and Princess Henriette in November, 1660, was to bring up the subject. Hyde, however, thought it beneath Charles's dignity to marry a woman who, the previous year, had spurned him as a poor catch, a woman who, after all, belonged to the scrub of Sicily.[4]

It has been suggested that Mazarin was not serious in his objections to the proposed marriage; that, in fact, he hoped to be able to plead that he had been overborne by the king's insistence. The available evidence hardly bears out this theory. His angry passages with Montagu over the business point only to one conclusion; he did not want Charles as a relative. He reminded the Abbot that from the first he had discouraged the proposal, notwithstanding the strong representations of Henrietta Maria and her Court, nor had he ever aspired to the honour of such a match. "You will recall," he wrote Montagu on November 17th, 1660, "that on my return from St. Jean-de-Luz where the matter was originally broached to me, I took up an attitude intended to dispose of the project once and for all." That neither Henrietta Maria nor Montagu should want to take the Cardinal at his word was quite understandable, having regard to the wealth that such a marriage would have brought the needy Stuarts, and the reinvigoration of the anti-Hyde cabal that the adhesion of Hortense, a Catholic, would have meant. According to the French Ambassador, Lionne [reporting a conversation he had had with Lord Bristol in 1661], Charles would have married Hortense if Mazarin had been prepared to deal frankly and

[1] England was still at war with Spain.
[2] Bishop Warburton's note to Clarendon's *History of Rebellion*.
[3] *France sous Mazarin*, by Chéruel.
[4] *Cardinal de Retz*, by David Ogg.

generously with him. That the Cardinal was prepared to do neither, suggests that he was not humbugging when he declared he had no wish for the proposed marriage.

The union of Princess Henriette and Philippe Duc d'Orléans, Louis XIV.'s worthless younger brother, had Mazarin's full approbation, conducing as it did to the much desired Anglo-French *entente*. To that extent he was in entire agreement with Henrietta Maria and Montagu, who were largely responsible for the match. But over the Duke of York's surprising marriage to Anne Hyde, the Chancellor's daughter, he parted company with them. While they wanted to repudiate the contract, he, attributing their hostility to dislike of the Chancellor, took the entirely opposite line, and, so Montagu unashamedly confessed to Hyde, forced them round to his way of thinking. In a frankly-worded letter, the Cardinal told the queen-mother she could not expect to be welcomed in France if she estranged herself from her sons or maintained animosity against those Ministers, the Chancellor in particular, whom the king most trusted. The unexpected friendliness of Mazarin, who had never previously shown him any kindness, naturally puzzled Hyde, but he professed to feel quite at ease concerning Montagu, whom he had never looked upon as an enemy—rather a shrewd remark in view of his future dependence on the Abbot.

As they had not seen each other for eleven years, the reunion of the Abbot and his brother must have been a singularly touching affair. In a letter dated October 23rd, Wat had spoken of the eagerness with which he looked forward to meeting one whom he loved with all the tenderness of his nature, and whose kindness he so much appreciated. He hoped that his Abbot's dress would not offend his Puritan brother.[1]

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Mazarin's death on March 9th, 1661, might have had important results for Montagu had Anne of Austria continued to exert her former political influence. But she had been stripped of all power by Louis XIV., who liked the Abbot, but not well enough to stir a finger on his behalf. Soon Montagu was to realise that the second of his women friends, Henrietta Maria, was equally bereft of influence, her strongly-expressed wish that he should officiate at the marriage of her daughter, the Princess Henriette, being disregarded on the flimsiest grounds. It was argued that the bridegroom's almoner, Daniel de Cosnac, being a Bishop, had the prior right. Since it was at Montagu's apartments at Pontoise that the Princess, on her return from England, had been greeted by Louis, his queen, and the Duc d'Orléans, it was excusable on his part to believe that he stood high enough in the French king's esteem to be chosen to perform the marriage ceremony.

Nor did his disappointments end there. In her new life, the Duchesse, while still continuing under his spiritual charge, was to see little of him, mainly because she chose to spend most of her time pleasure-seeking, often with her brother-in-law the king as companion. He still retained sufficient interest in mundane affairs to miss her vivacious conversation and those captivating touches of idiosyncratic character which to an ageing man's

[1] *Court and Society from Elizabeth to Anne*, by the Duke of Manchester.

spirit were as good as a tonic. Again, much as he valued the society of the two queens, with whom he had been so long associated, he had to admit they were dull and full of complaints ; wherefore it came as a relief to him to turn to one as young, lovely and sprightly as the Duchesse d'Orléans. Though he had to deplore her imprudence in being seen so often with the king, he had not the heart to blame her, knowing full well the kind of husband she had married. When in due course Anne of Austria called upon him to remonstrate with her daughter-in-law on the folly of those moonlight flirtations with Louis, which were provoking such unpleasant gossip, he shied at the task, speaking with such gentleness to the Princess that the queen-mother was herself forced to undertake the correction.

The suspicion that he was never to be more than an Abbot was a chastening thought which increasingly set the tone of his moods. Mme. de Motteville, who shared Anne of Austria's regard for him, sought to honour his memory by insisting that true piety made him wholly disinterested, but she never properly understood him. Under his Abbot's robes he was a Montagu, faithful after his own fashion to the family traditions, which pictured high distinction as the rightful goal of all.

That he ministered to the Church with such unselfish zeal, placing her welfare before aught else, did not mean complete abnegation of all ambition. Far from it. He would dearly have loved to become a prince of Rome, but promotion was not the sole or even the main reason for his unsparing energies. Personal considerations were always subordinate to the best interests of the cause he served. Religious conviction, not opportunism, was the compelling motive of his being. In other words he was not, in the real sense of the term, a careerist.

At rare intervals, mostly to see Henrietta Maria, he crossed to England, but the feeling against Popery was too strong for him to want to embarrass his relatives with his presence. Even so, he was suspected of being up to his old intrigues, and if Cominges, the French Ambassador, is to be believed, the uneasiness his infrequent visits aroused was chiefly responsible for the agitation in 1663 for the expulsion from England of all Roman Catholic priests.[1] When for reasons of health the queen-mother returned to France, Montagu had less excuse than ever for revisiting his native land. Being for all practical purposes side-tracked, she offered the alert-minded Abbot little scope for political activity. But in proportion as the influence of her mother waned, that of the Duchesse d'Orléans visibly increased, and whereas before she had been notoriously inaccessible to Montagu, now she could not consult him often enough. Hence he had not to complain of time hanging on his hands.

He earned H.R.H.'s gratitude by relieving her of a certain amount of routine correspondence with England, especially that connected with the collection of the £40,000 dowry promised her by the English Government. It was thanks to his perseverance that she received any payment from the perennially hard-up Treasury. His was the curious distinction of being trusted both by husband and wife ; indeed, he was one of the few English-

[1] Cominges to Louis XIV., March 26th, 1663. Quoted in *Charles II. and Madame*, by C. H. Hartmann.

men whom the suspicious and fretful Duc d'Orléans welcomed to his house. To remain on good terms with the ill-assorted royal pair he had to pretend to hear and see nothing that called for comment—to turn a blind eye to Madame's flirtations, no less than to the Duc's sexual aberrations.

When in 1666, after a long and painful illness, Anne of Austria passed away, the Abbot felt uncommonly lonely. It was the end of a more or less intimate association lasting nearly forty years. To her he owed whatever advancement he had been accorded. She would have done more for him had not Mazarin, and then Louis, stood in the way. That his position was not immediately weakened by her demise was due to the assistance he was able to render the French king in his efforts to improve relations with England.

From the moment [the autumn of 1668] the idea of an Anglo-French alliance commended itself to both monarchs, Montagu had to be prepared for frequent visits to Versailles for consultation. His comings and goings were little to the liking of his pushful cousin, Ralph Montagu [son of the 2nd Lord Montagu of Boughton], who as our Ambassador in Paris resented any intrusion of his province. He considered the Abbot an interfering old fool, disposed to blab all he knew, which malicious untruth he repeated to Lord Arlington, principal Secretary of State, adding: "The Abbé Montagu is just in France as my Lord Chamberlain [the Earl of Manchester, Wat's brother] is in England, and extremely useless to me, for he is grown very ignorant and out of fashion."[1] It was just as well for the Ambassador that he had a conveniently short memory, for presently he would be relying on the so-called ignorant and out-of-date old fellow to influence the king in his father's favour and Arlington in his own—double-faced conduct typical of Restoration manners.

The Ambassador's letter running down his cousin was dated May 8th, 1669, at which date the Abbot, off and on for months, had been closeted with Louis daily for hours together at St. Germain-en-Laye or Versailles, translating into French Charles's letters to the king, and helping with the replies. Of his negotiations, a necessary preliminary to the Secret Treaty of Dover, Ralph Montagu was being kept in entire ignorance, an apt commentary on the inappropriateness of his sneers at his cousin.

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That August the Abbot was to lose his greatest friend, Henrietta Maria. For some time she had been in failing health, but the actual cause of death was an overdose of laudanum taken to relieve pain, as well as to induce sleep. She was in her 61st year. Though intellectually much his inferior, the dead queen had been the chief influence in his life, encouraging those uncompromising and bigoted tendencies in his nature which a wiser or more prudent woman would have sought to repress. To that extent she was as disastrous to his career as she was to her husband's. Only when he was beyond cure did she realise that it would have been better for everybody, if the once gay Cavalier had not been so fully clothed in her spirit. But for her ceaseless propaganda he might have pursued a wholly different

[1] Buccleuch MSS.

career, though in any calling he chose to adopt his ability and masterful energy must have carried him far.

Having conveyed the dead queen's heart to Chaillot, the nunnery near Paris which she had established as a quiet retreat for herself, and otherwise paid her memory fitting respect, Montagu, the recipient of her last wishes, entered upon the cumbersome task of administering her estate. The best of her plate and portable possessions, together with her private papers, he delivered over to Charles. What remained of her silver he suggested selling, the proceeds, in accordance with the dead queen's desire, being devoted to the poor.

Deprived of the protection of the two queens, Montagu was in no position to withstand the demand of Louis's Ministers that he should resign his fine apartments at St. Martin's Abbey to the young Cardinal Bouillon, though without losing the revenue.[1] As he had reached the age of 65, he was considered to have no ground for complaint, and in any case the position was one traditionally reserved for a great dignitary whom France wished to honour. Quite philosophic about his changed fortune, the Abbot took up his quarters at the Hospital for the Incurables, a Paris institution for poor, infirm persons. There, being saluted by the Rev. William Clifford, a descendant of the Earl of Cumberland, with the remark, "You are come, my lord, to help me to die," he made answer, "On the contrary, I am come to you to learn how to die." This was no mere figure of speech. According to the *Foley Records*, his motive in choosing this particular retreat was to profit by the example of the pious Jesuit.

If Montagu was not exactly the author of Madame's[2] letters to Charles concerning the alliance with France and the Grand Design, he had much to do with their composition and text. Naturally enough the religious clauses interested him most, and the failure to carry them into effect was as great a disappointment to him as the collapse of his own personal hopes. That the highly suspicious Duc d'Orléans was never to suspect the nature of the work on which Madame and the Abbot were so long, and so earnestly engaged, says much for Montagu's adroitness, and is possibly the best answer to the slanderous charge that he was a blabber.

Hardly had he recovered from the shock of losing the two queens with whom so much of his life had been spent, than in June, 1670, close on the signing of the Secret Treaty of Dover, he was called upon to mourn the death of the Duchesse, a stroke of fate which, even fortified as he was by the teachings of his religion, he found it difficult not to resent as something cruel and wholly undeserved. With the Princess gone, his mundane duties tended to take on the complexion of a weary, empty ritual, void of satisfaction. Less disposed than Ralph Montagu to rash conclusions, he refused to believe that the poor lady had been poisoned by her jealous husband, a theory vigorously espoused by the Ambassador. It was a pure formality his being present at the autopsy, which refuted all suggestion of foul play. To tell the truth he never expected any other verdict.

Nor was he disposed to shun the husband, taking the charitable view that

[1] Dodd's *Church History*.
[2] Courtesy title of the Duchesse d'Orléans.

in losing his wife, the Duc had been punished enough for his domestic shortcomings. Indeed, he remained with him at St. Cloud for several days, ostensibly to interpret such of Charles's letters to his dead sister as were connected with the Grand Design, Monsieur having seized the casket containing the correspondence ; actually to keep an eye on the precious documents, and prevent them falling into the wrong hands. As in conversation later with his brother, the king, the Duc made no mention of Catholicism, the most arresting feature of the correspondence, it is a fair assumption that Montagu translated only those parts which he considered innocuous.[1]

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In a letter to Charles dated July 26th, 1670, Montagu pleaded the cause of Ralph's father, the 2nd Lord Montagu of Boughton, saying it was the Duchesse's last wish that he should be made an Earl.[2] But the king had not forgiven the virtuous peer for turning his back on the lecherous Court at Whitehall, and he liked the Abbot no more than he liked the Ambassador, his cousin, which was not at all. What is more, convinced that Ralph had prompted this appealing letter, he made some disparaging remark about him to Arlington, who wrote complainingly to the Abbot. Shown the letter the Ambassador was greatly upset, and sought to conciliate Arlington, who was merely his master's mouthpiece, by urging that he was entirely devoted to his interests.[3]

The last of the Abbot's sorrows was the death in May, 1671, of his elder brother, the 2nd Earl of Manchester, who had passed away after surviving all five wives. He had avoided introducing a note of bitterness into their relations by resolutely eschewing religious polemics, and he had the satisfaction of knowing that they had been good and affectionate brothers to the end. If it was the Earl's lot to be the more helpful of the two, that was entirely because of circumstance, and reflected no discredit on the other.

The cumulative effect of these several griefs was to mellow Montagu's nature and revive something of his old genial self, when he valued men for what they were, and not for what they believed. Nowhere did his better nature shine more than in his dealings with Clarendon, who, after his fall, or rather shameless betrayal by Charles, had taken refuge in France. "You are the only friend I have at the French Court," the ex-Chancellor frankly admitted. Montagu strove to deserve the compliment by unremitting exertions on his behalf, mainly directed at gaining the aged statesman some freedom of movement.

A letter[4] from Montagu to Arlington, dated February 28th, 1671, eloquently illustrates the trouble he took. He had received a request from Lord Clarendon for a *sauve garde* [safe-conduct pass] allowing him to proceed to Bourbon for treatment of his gout. That Clarendon fought shy of such surgeons as were to be had at Evreux was not to be wondered at, seeing that they treated him for stone rather than gout. Montagu could not imagine how

[1] In *Charles II. and Madame*, by C. H. Hartmann, the relevant letter from the Marquis de Lionne, French Foreign Minister, to the French Ambassador, dated July 11th, 1670, is quoted *in extenso*.

[2, 3, 4] Buccleuch MSS.

the ex-Chancellor being this much nearer to England could offend or affright the Parliamentarians.[1] His helpful attitude shamed the king and his Ministers busy persecuting one who had deserved at their hands a kinder fate.

Of the Abbot in his declining years we know little more than that, in an excess of piety, he was apt to condemn as wasted the years spent out of the service of the Church. He even went so far as to apologise for his poetical exercises, not because they were so mediocre, but because his pen might have been so much more profitably employed in devout essays. How he felt can be gauged from a painfully tortuous sentence in the preface to the translation, which he completed in 1672, of Bossuet's *Exposition of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church* :

> " Having presented my country, in their several seasons, spring flowers and others, summer fruits, as the Perfumes of Poetry and the Reflections of Morality ; now in this winter of my age I transport to my nation this riper and more wholesome fruit, the feeding whereon, contrary to the effect denounced against the forbidden fruit, may produce life everlasting."

This was his last known writing, the effort of a devout man whom over-piety had made unconscionably dull. He died on February 5th, 1677, at peace with himself and his Maker, and was laid to rest in the Chapel of the Incurables, though some assert that he was buried at Pontoise. To the end he occupied himself in improving talks with his religious brethren, who listened to him as to one who had been vouchsafed the inestimable blessing of a great deliverance. He could, had he wished, have entertained them greatly with his youthful memories, for, as his old crony, Ben Jonson, wrote in the *Underwoods*, he had :

> Eaten with the beauties and the wits
> And braveries of Court, and felt their fits
> Of love and hate, and come so nigh to know
> Whether their fancies were their own or no.

The Duchesse de Chevreuse outlived the Abbot, as she was destined to outlive all their mutual friends. If during the last fifteen or twenty years they had heard of each other, they seem to have experienced no desire to meet. His religious enthusiasm had saved him from disillusionment, and in her old age she sought salvation by the same means. She still retained sufficient of the old imperious spirit to direct how she should be buried—simply and unostentatiously, with no reminder of the world's grandeur which once had such power to move her stout heart. On an August day—the 17th—in the year 1679, penitent and purged of pride, her consuming sin, the Duchesse closed her eyes for ever in sleep.

[1] A well-deserved sneer at the intolerant M.P.s who wanted Clarendon to be as far from Paris as possible.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TRAGIC COMEDIAN

THAT he was a poet and suffered from the artistic temperament may seem adequate enough explanation of the otherwise inexplicable behaviour of Edward [Ned] Montagu, elder son of the 2nd Lord Montagu, and Master of the Horse to Catherine of Braganza, who was disgraced for seeming to be over-tender in his manner towards his royal mistress. Whether the title of poet was his by right of merit or was merely a courteous concession on the part of his associates, mostly rhymesters of a sort, we cannot say. The evidence on the point is vague and elusive, and, what is of more serious consequence, none of his verse has survived to give us the measure of his quality. The presumption is that he was one of that numerous band of poetasters whom Sir Charles Sedley had in mind when he spawned the contemptuous phrase, "every fop wrote songs!" Moreover, the way he chose to tempt fate was just the kind of fantastic caper to be expected from a Restoration versifier with a superheated brain.

Whether we are to regard Montagu as a deeply-wronged person, more sinned against than sinning, or just a rashly aspiring fool, depends on our answers to a number of none too easy questions: What exactly was the potent attraction which the little, dark, soft-voiced queen, so homely in looks, had for this gay Restoration buck? If not love, what then? Was Catherine, after all, personable enough to inspire an experienced, though admittedly rather harebrained, worldling, with feelings akin to love? If so, why throughout the ill-starred comedy did no womanly instinct warn her that this devoted friend, given to excess like so many of his associates, was dangerously overplaying his part? Finally, and this is perhaps the most pertinent query of all, why should Charles II., most neglectful and indifferent of husbands, never without a glamorous mistress to keep him pleasantly occupied, resent his lonely and by no means seductive spouse having an admirer?

There was, to be sure, nothing very novel about a young man of noble birth falling in love with a queen, single or married, though it was usual for these attentions to be encouraged, or, under a mask of modesty, tolerated by the fair charmer, mostly so bored or cramped by royal ceremonial as to be ripe for passionate admiration, instances in point being Anne Boleyn, her infinitely more astute daughter, Elizabeth, and Mary, Queen of Scots.

It has happened, of course, more than once, that a gentleman of fine presence has unwittingly aroused expectations in a royal breast which he has been unable or unwilling to satisfy, as witness the lamentable experience of Maria de' Medici, from whose passionate clasp the young and fantastical Sir Kenelm Digby recoiled as precipitately as God-fearing Joseph from the dishonouring embrace of Potiphar's wife. But to moonstruck Ned Montagu was to belong the distinction of breaking entirely new ground in the domain of passionate adventure. Whatever message he meant to convey by the

ardent gesture which provoked his ruin was completely wasted on Queen Catherine, who, being wholly unversed in the arts of gallantry, naïvely enough sought enlightenment from her seasoned husband. Under such conditions the most innocuous of sentimental passages was bound to look ugly and awry, and the offender appear either an ambitious rascal or a vanity-ridden simpleton.

As related by Lord Dartmouth in a note to Burnet's *History of his Own Time*, the episode has a quaint, almost pantomimic quality. The queen, never having had an admirer before nor after, asked the king what people meant by squeezing one by the hand. The king told her "love". "Then," said she, "Mr. Montagu loves me mightily"; upon which he was turned out! The historian Boyer, presumably basing himself on reliable gossip, confirms Dartmouth's facts. The hand-pressing, it should be added, was done while Montagu was escorting the coy and callow queen to her carriage.

Whereas Lord Dartmouth relates his remarks to a specific occasion, Pepys, who nourished a grudge against Montagu, covers a much wider field, bringing the whole of the Master of the Horse's conduct under review. Nevertheless, in the one essential, the cause of the young man's downfall, they are in tolerable agreement: he came into conflict with the king because of his immoderate behaviour towards the queen.

Pepys's story may be steeped in malice, but it is too circumstantial to be other than the truth:

> "May 20th, 1664, Edward Montagu is turned out of the Court [not] to return again. His fault, I perceive, was his pride, and most of all his affecting to seem great with the Queen, and it seems, indeed, had more of her ear than anybody else, and would be with her talking alone two or three hours together; insomuch that the Lords about the King, when he would be jesting with them about their wives, would tell the King that he must have a care of his wife, too, for she hath now the gallant; and they say the King himself did once ask Montagu how his mistress (meaning the Queen) did.
>
> "He grew so proud and despised everybody, besides suffering nobody, he or she, to get or do anything about the Queen, that they all laboured to do him a good turn. . . . But strange it is that this man should from the greatest negligence in the world, come to be the miracle of attendance, so as to take all offices from everybody, either men or women, about the Queen. The world concluded that there must be something more than ordinary to cause him to do this. So he is gone, nobody pitying but laughing at him; and he pretends only that he is gone to his father that is sick in the country."

That Dartmouth should appear the more exactly informed of the two as to the immediate cause of Montagu's dismissal is scarcely surprising, having regard to his astonishing gift for worming confidences out of Charles, who in his company would divulge the most piquant of Court secrets. Evidently what angered the king were not doubts about his wife's chastity, which, as he was well aware, was above suspicion, but fear of being made

an object of ridicule, always a sensitive point with the Stuarts. He did not want people going round the Court whispering that the queen's young Master of the Horse was either in love, or pretending to be in love, with his royal mistress, a situation rendered all the more absurd by Her Majesty's unsuitability for such a romantic rôle, no less than the knowledge, common to most people, of how manifold were Montagu's opportunities for safer and more congenial love-making elsewhere.

It is hard to believe that the hand-squeezing was more than a pleasant gesture, as void of genuine emotional significance as, say the kiss, to quote a modern instance, which Anatole France, himself advanced in years, planted on the chaste cheek of the venerable Bernard Shaw the last time they met in London. The mischief, we repeat, lay not so much in what Montagu did, as in the gossip which his behaviour attracted, and the damaging interpretation put on that behaviour. He had committed the unforgivable sin of turning against the king what had come to be regarded as a legitimate joke at his subjects' expense. Rarely had the Restoration wits been provided with a more delectable topic on which to exercise their mocking talents. They were used to making merry over the king's goings-on, but now they could vary their mirth with sly quips directed at his prudish queen, the last person on earth likely to be involved in scandal. It gave them no end of moral satisfaction to be able behind his back to quiz Charles, who had mercilessly cuckolded so many husbands, on himself having had a narrow escape from the same humiliating experience; which explained why he had struck out with such savagery against his wife's personal attendant.

It would be underestimating the king's cleverness to suggest that he had not been prepared to have his feelings misrepresented. Otherwise, as one who put his own comfort and convenience before all else, he would never have gone to the lengths of subjecting the royal household to this most undesirable notoriety, nor been so quick to disgrace a loyal servitor to whom he was under such deep obligation. For as Clarendon, who rather liked the harum-scarum young rascal, openly admitted, it was Montagu who had won over the brave Earl of Sandwich, his cousin and bosom friend, to the royal cause.[1]

. . . . . .

Charles had reason to be grateful not only to the queen's Master of the Horse and the Earl of Sandwich, but to two other Montagues, both cousins of the disgraced man: the fighting 2nd Earl of Manchester, now Lord Chamberlain, and the Abbot Walter Montagu, spiritual adviser to the queen-mother. In dishonouring one he embarrassed the others, so close were the family ties, and so interlinked their respective interests. Moreover, in striking at Ned Montagu he had largely gone back on his own words, for as recently as November 25th, 1663, he had written Montagu's father, the dignified and reserved 2nd Lord Montagu of Boughton, who for years had been worried by his son's misdeeds and escapades, indicating the pleasure it would give him to serve the House of Montagu. Charles's letter, returning

[1] See preceding chapter.

thanks to the old peer for heeding the plea that he should pardon his extravagant and profligate son Ned, was remarkable for acknowledging the service rendered him by that young man. "I am glad," he wrote, "to hear my recommendation of your son to your kindness hath so good effect, for he has asked my leave to go and see you and to receive the fruits of it. I shall be glad to hear you have given the like encouragement to his brother [Ralph], of whom I have a very good opinion, though he hath not had the like occasions of serving me so considerably: for whose sake, and your own good affection to my service, you shall always find me ready to entertain any opportunity of doing you a good turn, or to any of your relatives, [signed] Your affectionate friend, Charles R.".[1]

That letter, as will be seen, was written in November. By the following May the fat was fairly in the fire: the faithful servant had squeezed his royal mistress's hand, perhaps a shade too warmly—what, considering the licence of those days, was flash-point in hand-pressing is difficult to say—and had paid for his temerity by losing his once-grateful master's favour and being ignominiously kicked out, all his past service forgotten.

That the fall of Montagu must have been a leading topic in the circles he frequented was clear not only from Pepys's allusions, but from the references made to it by such minor poets as Sir John Denham, who in his poem, *Directions to a Painter concerning the Dutch War*, 1667, after referring to Sandwich making with the Fleet for Bergen, Norway, drags in this remark:

> His cousin Mountague by Court-disaster,
> Dwindled into the Wooden-horse's master.[2]

In a dull, unimaginative sort of way Catherine liked her Master of Horse, responding a little to his obvious solicitude on her behalf, and to be the innocent cause of his disgrace deeply grieved her. It may be, too, that she had sufficient feminine vanity to feel that the one man at the English Court whom she had stirred to such perilous admiration deserved a kinder fate. But, however great her distress, she refrained, for fear of being misunderstood, or giving further cause for gossip, from taking any steps to have him pardoned. Never had she discriminated in his favour, nor given him the least cause to think that he meant more to her than did other members of her household. On the contrary, on his falling out with Lord Chesterfield [2nd Earl], her Lord Chamberlain, over the vexed question as to who should have precedence in taking her hand when she ventured into the street, she had not hesitated to declare him in the wrong, an unwelcome rebuff which inspired Pepys [January 25th, 1663] to this sour comment, "So that I perceive he [Montagu] goes down the wind in honour, as well as in everything else, every day."

However suspicious Montagu's conduct, calling as it did for condign punishment, may have seemed to the evil-minded crew who surrounded the king, there was never any question of his being in love with the queen in the sense that Charles was in love with Lady Castlemaine, or any other

[1] Buccleuch MSS.

[2] *Poems on State Occasions*, Vol. I. The author of the reference to Montagu is usually (and quite wrongly) said to be Marvell.

CATHERINE OF BRAGANZA
(After the portraits by Sir Peter Lely)

ANNE OF AUSTRIA
(After the portrait by Philippe de Champaigne)

LOUIS XIV OF FRANCE
(After the portrait by J. de la Haye)

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ
(After the portrait by Muntz)

of his lady friends. He had simply fallen a victim to the romanticising element in his nature; he idealised the queen, whom he looked upon as cruelly neglected by her husband. Now a romanticist at the court of staid, prosaic, narrow-minded Catherine of Braganza was as much out of place as would be the ghost of Henry VIII. at the sedate South Street [Mayfair] establishment of Florence Nightingale. Sooner or later something was bound to explode. Disaster, irretrievable and certain, was written in every admiring look he bestowed on the little brunette from Portugal, who looked at him with half-shut, unanswering eyes. To him she was a much-wronged heroine eminently in need of a knight-errant, a rôle for which he was persuaded destiny had cast him; to her he was a strange Englishman, mad as most, with bold eyes and a curious habit of holding her hand overlong, as though plunged in thought, or given to fits of absent-mindedness.

Is it possible that her womanly instinct failed to put her on her guard, failed to warn her that Montagu's devotion, unless checked, was likely to have embarrassing complications? Surely, one would think, his persistent attempts to monopolise every form of manly service on her behalf must have aroused her suspicions?

Even had she still remained in blissful ignorance of approaching danger, his almost dictatorial manner of saying who should, or should not, be excluded from the royal household would, it is argued, have caused her to sit up and take notice. Incredible to relate, Catherine was no more moved by the agitating manœuvres we have described than by the suggestive talk to which they gave rise. But in all fairness it should be stressed that dismay at her loveless marriage and the undignified position she was made to assume at the court, where Lady Castlemaine rather than she queened it, largely clouded her by no means penetrating intellect; otherwise she can hardly have failed to apprehend the situation, and, by applying the cold douche of tactful and reasoned rebuke, taken effective steps to prevent Montagu from destroying himself.

. . . . . .

To be ruined, not as Antony for the sake of a great beauty, but for a plain-looking woman with scarce an ounce of glamour in her composition, and stupid enough to betray his devotion, must have been gall and wormwood to the bemused courtier-poet, now restored to some semblance of sanity by the tragic reality of his position. According to the majority of accounts the little queen was worse than plain; she was positively ugly, and this is confirmed by the more truthful of her portraits, which show us a fat, heavy, good-natured creature, who could only have fascinated a man of peculiarly unrefined taste. In the idealised portraits, such as the one at Versailles spoken of by Miss Strickland, who was persuaded that she was beautiful, the queen looks very presentable. But on occasion Lely could be as much a flatterer as Rubens, a romanticist who painted Anne of Austria with perfect, aristocratic features, whereas, to mention but one blemish, she suffered from a thick nose.

In the collection of Horace Walpole used to repose a miniature said to be identical with that presented before marriage for Charles's approval. On

seeing the lovely, glowing brunette with large black eyes and a rich profusion of chestnut hair there represented,[1] the king could be excused for saying "that person cannot be unhandsome". But there is no proof that Walpole's portrait was the one inspected by the king, or that, assuming its authenticity, it bore any resemblance to the original. Instances are not unknown to history of substitutes masquerading as the real portraits of unprepossessing foreign princesses, affianced before their prospective husbands had caught a glimpse of them.

With more frankness than delicacy the *Grammont Memoirs* speak of Catherine as undersized, squat, swarthy and running to fat, largely the result of her sedentary habits. This unwieldiness her curious manner of dressing did much to emphasise. From other sources we learn that her teeth were so badly set as to constitute a deformity,[2] the fore-teeth projecting so as to hold up the top lip.[3]

The Duchesse de Longueville, maid of honour to Queen Anne when still Princess of Denmark, describes Catherine as "a little ungraceful woman so short-legged that when she stood upon her feet you would have thought she was on her knees, and yet so long-waisted that when she sat down she appeared a well-sized woman."[4]

Lord Dartmouth, asserting that the information came from the king, declares that when Charles first looked upon his Portuguese bride "he thought they had brought him a bat, instead of a woman", which explains his relief at not being expected to keep his wife company the night of the marriage; she excusing herself on the ground of feeling tired and wanting to be alone.

That very temperate gentleman, Sir John Reresby, says, "it was very discernible that the king was not much enamoured of his bride. She is very little, not handsome (though her face is indifferent), and her education so different from his, being most of her time brought up in a monastery that she had nothing visible about her capable to make the king forget his inclination to the Countess of Castlemaine, who was then the finest woman of her age."[5]

When writing to Clarendon about his wife, Charles was more guarded in his speech than when discoursing about her to Lord Dartmouth, though even then what he said could scarcely be deemed flattering: "Her face was not so exact as to be called a beauty, though her eyes are excellent good, and nothing in the face that in the least degree can disgust one. On the contrary, she hath as much agreeableness in her looks as I ever saw." Miss Strickland, in her *Queens of England*, takes the view that Charles was favourably impressed, but there is only too much reason to believe that she was led astray by her sympathies for the ill-used queen. The phrase, "there is nothing in her face that can disgust one", by no manner of means partakes of the language of a delighted husband, nor is the neighbouring phrase, "her eyes are excellent good", much of a compliment, reminiscent

[1] *Queens of England*, by Agnes Strickland.
[2] Forneron: *The Court of Charles II.*
[3] Lord Dartmouth; Evelyn.
[4] Oldys's MS. note to Langbaine.
[5] *Memoirs of Sir John Reresby*, edited by J. J. Cartwright.

as it is of the polite comment customarily passed on a plain-looking woman whom we have no wish to offend.

Clarendon's remark, that the queen had beauty and wit enough to make herself agreeable to the king, is the smooth, insincere talk of a statesman desirous of being chivalrous, and is as much humbug as the fulsome flattery of the 2nd Lord Chesterfield: "She was exactly shaped as to person, with lovely hands, excellent eyes, a good countenance, pleasing voice, fair hair, in a word what an understanding man would wish a wife." Since Chesterfield had the reputation of being the first of Lady Castlemaine's numerous lovers, and could hardly avoid comparing her dazzling charms with the less obvious beauty endowment of the queen, he must have been in a singularly indulgent frame of mind to award Catherine such high marks.

Evelyn, beyond criticising her teeth, "which wronged her mouth", was equally all praise. The queen was the handsomest of all the Portuguese ladies who had come over, and though low of stature prettily shaped, with languishing and excellent eyes; for the rest lovely enough. Burnet dismissed her as a woman of mean appearance and of no agreeable temper, so that the king never considered her much. That fascinating rascal Pepys, who had an uncommonly sharp eye for a pretty face, was not impressed; but, moved like Clarendon by a sense of chivalry, did his best to hide his real feelings: "The queen, though she be not a very charming, yet hath she a good, modest and innocent look which is most pleasing." Again, "All people say of her that she is a very fine, handsome lady and very discreet," which is an ingenious way of paying a compliment without committing oneself. Later we are told that Lady Sandwich speaks of her as "a most pretty woman".

In the *Wynn Papers* the queen is spoken of as "a very beautiful, handsome princess, but low and slender, and of a solid, grave countenance, quick wit and a great housewife. The king is said to be very much taken with her and very fond of her." The worthlessness of this testimony may be gathered from its palpable errors. The queen was obese and completely lacking in wit; the king, so far from being devoted to her, spent his days and nights with Lady Castlemaine.

If, after the seemingly conflicting evidence assembled above, we are still in doubt as to whether Catherine of Braganza resembled in radiance Venus emerging from her bath, or, to repeat Charles, was more like a bat, the least flattering portrait by Lely will give us our answer. To maintain in face of this telling evidence that she was handsome is to show complete absence of taste.

Judged by the comment it aroused, Catherine's lack of physical attractiveness was partially redeemed by ultra-fastidiousness in the matter of personal toilet. *The Colbert Papers*, appraising her habits by seventeenth-century standards, pays her this quaintly-sounding compliment: "she is extremely clean and takes a bath once every six weeks, winter and summer. Nobody ever sees her in her bath, not even her maids, curtains being drawn around." If excessive prudery, it was, nevertheless, in keeping with the abnormal modesty of the Portuguese ladies-in-waiting, all of whom, without

exception, refused to sully their virginity by using sheets that had once shielded a man's body. And before marriage, subscribing to the old Moorish custom, Catherine used to shave her body,[1] but after marriage, being Anglicized, she dropped the practice.

Such, then, was the royal lady whose hand the impulsive Edward Montagu squeezed once too often for her peace of mind and his own comfort. Realising how isolated she was in that depraved Court over which she, convent-bred and with no experience of Restoration manners, was supposed, jointly with the king, to preside, he felt sorry for her, and his pity expressed itself in a tenderness which, as events turned out, was to end in ruin. There was no evil in his affection for the queen ; it was, having regard to the times in which he was living, just folly.

. . . . . .

For a Montagu he was strangely lacking in shrewdness. But an even worse disability was his quarrelsome disposition. Instead of being among the most popular of the young men at Whitehall, he was among the most disliked. There was no agreeing with him.[2] He rowed with his father over money matters, and by associating himself with the wicked court, a course which in the old gentleman's opinion was likely to complete his demoralisation, he precipitated a definite estrangement. Thereafter he was under the necessity of writing humble letters to his father, in which, professing contrition for his behaviour, he besought pardon. As already shown, he fell out with Lord Chesterfield, a dangerous fellow to antagonise ; he annoyed the Duke of Monmouth, Charles's favourite bastard ; he fought a duel with Hugh Cholmley, first gentleman-usher to the queen, and, what was supreme foolishness, he drifted apart from the Earl of Sandwich, his best and most genuine friend.

At one time they seemed inseparable, for many were the interests they discovered in common, not least, delight in a handsome, flirtatious wench. Vulnerable on the side of his passions, the brave seaman, colleague of Blake, could be beguiled into indiscretions which in his saner moments he would regret. Familiar to all who have studied Pepys' diary must be the shock caused that paragon of virtue by the discovery of his patron's goings-on in Paradise Row, Chelsea—playing the fool with his slut, pretty Betty Becke, " carrying her abroad and playing on his lute, under her window, and forty other poor, sordid things."

While knowing Montagu to be a dangerously erratic fellow, who on rejoining the Fleet left all his baggage behind, much to the amusement of the king and the court generally, Lord Sandwich must still have been flabbergasted by his cousin's fantastic behaviour in respect to the queen. Little could he have suspected, when they voyaged together to Portugal to bring back Catherine, what an ignoble fate was in store for his cheerful companion.

Montagu appears to have been one of those unfortunate mortals who are never out of trouble. Perennially hard-up, he persuaded Sandwich, who

[1] *La Cour et la Ville*, by M. Barrière, p. 379.

[2] " A proper man and well bred," says Clarendon, " but not easy to be pleased."

mostly suffered from the same embarrassment, notwithstanding his handsome income from the Great Wardrobe, to lend him £400, Sir Daniel Harvey,[1] sometime our Ambassador to Turkey, guaranteeing repayment. In other ways he contrived to make full use of the Earl, much to the disgust of Pepys, who was convinced that his patron's good nature was being imposed upon. Since we are dependent on Pepys for much of our information concerning Montagu, it is well to remember that the Master of the Horse was his pet aversion ; hence we should do wrong to take all that he tells us at its full face value. Despite his dislike of Montagu, he saw nothing unseemly in visiting his bohemian, quite unconventional, bachelor establishment in Westminster, where he was edified by the sight of a Frenchman discoursing "most extreme well", upon the guitar, though at the best it were but a bauble.

But let Pepys have his say. When preparations were being made for the voyage to Portugal, Lord Sandwich, to save himself trouble, commissioned Montagu to expend £5,000 on his behalf, but in all only £3,000 of the money was laid out, the remainder, to put it brutally, being misappropriated to the cousin's own use, which base doings, coupled with fear of the dishonour he might do the Earl, filled Pepys and his crony, Sir Thomas Crew, with the direst misgivings.

In the spring of 1663 Montagu and Sandwich had a tiff, and to aggravate matters "the fool" [Pepys' language] complained to the Lord Chancellor that anything Sandwich had ever done had been by his direction and persuasion, a reference, presumably, to Montagu's success in winning over his cousin to the king's cause. Though, as was his habit, the impetuous young man later saw the error of his ways and hastened to make amends, it is doubtful whether the breach was ever properly healed. The months passed, Montagu committed the fatal slip which led to his undoing with the king, and Sandwich, so far from sympathising with his cousin, seems to have taken the view that the queen was well rid of him. When the young man's dismissal had ceased to be a nine days' wonder, he told Pepys that Montagu, with whom he had thought fit to share all his secrets, had left owing him £2,000, and one way or another had behaved very despicably towards him. Now the ungrateful fellow had faded out of the picture, hated by the king and the Duke of York, as much on that account as because of his conduct generally, leaving him [Sandwich] fully seized of the wisdom of never trusting any man too much, for that were to put yourself in his power, and on a quarrel ensuing, even if he professed to be your best friend, he gave you away.

Disowned by his father (to whom, despite the numerous pleas made on his behalf, he had never been thoroughly reconciled), by his cousin, Lord Sandwich, and by the king, all hopes of a career of usefulness under the Crown seemingly ended by his disgrace, Montagu wandered disconsolately about the country. As a last resource he addressed himself to Sir Henry Bennet, later Earl of Arlington, Secretary of State. His letter, dated August 29th, 1664, bespoke the desperate mood of one who fancied he had reached the end of his tether. If his last proposal for employment were

[1] Sir Daniel Harvey had married Montagu's sister, Elizabeth.

unsuccessful, he wrote, he would rather choose what was worse for himself than trouble his friends further.[1]

In the autumn of 1665, he joined the Fleet engaged in fighting the Dutch. According to Burnet, he was persuaded he would never return alive to England. The Earl of Rochester and another similarly-minded entered into a compact under which the first of the two to die was to let the other know whether or not a future state existed, an arrangement which, alas! for science, was to give no tangible results. Montagu refused to be a party to the compact. Off Bergen, Norway, reckless of consequences, he took his stand on deck exposed to every form of peril. Seeing a fellow officer falter, he went to his support. A cannon-ball struck him, and within an hour he was dead.

Little remains to be added to his pitiful life-story. The queen, whom all too extravagantly the ill-fated young man sought to serve, was genuinely moved by the news of his brave, untimely end, and, if tradition is to be relied upon, by a last dying message to her written in his blood. At any rate, as some sort of tribute to his memory, though, officially, the transaction earned no such sentimental significance, she agreed to appoint in his place his brother Ralph, who was as slick-witted as the other, a poet, be it never forgotten, was romantic, feckless and rash.

[1] *Charles II. Domestic State Papers*, 1663–1664, p. 675.

CHAPTER FOUR

A CULTURED KNAVE

SO many harsh things have been said, and with such positive assurance, of Ralph Montagu, the 1st Duke of Montagu, who in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries combined uncommon rascality with all the marks of culture and good-breeding, and boundless prosperity with a princely display of magnificence, that it would seem a task of peculiar difficulty to dispel the time-honoured belief that he was just an unscrupulous rogue, whose life performance disentitled him to any generous consideration. Some of his contemporaries, their views not entirely untinctured with envy, could hardly find adjectives strong enough to mark their sense of his turpitude. James II., a full-blooded hater, who had good reason for disliking Montagu, branded him as false and perfidious ; Swift, whose judgments were frequently conditioned by the state of his health, summed him up "as arrant a knave as any in his time," while Pepys, quick to jump to conclusions, not always accurate, pronounced him, like his elder brother Edward, a scurvy fellow.

Even if he were no more than a scoundrel wholly destitute of moral principle and capable of the most degrading compliances, his history would still be worth writing, for he carried picturesque audacity and the knack of exciting interest into all his actions. Fortunately, rascality did not exhaust his achievement, and when full justice is done to all the sides of his colourful personality, we have, or should have, a most entertaining chronicle. Like Charles II., in whose service he learnt to demean himself, he was a mixture of good and bad, with the bad too often seeming to predominate. If it scarcely condones his actions, at least it reduces them to their rightful proportions, to say that he behaved no worse and no better than his royal master, whose example set the tone of Restoration society and encouraged the rise of courtiers of the Ralph Montagu type.

The courtier or politician, who at some sacrifice to himself elected to behave honourably and becomingly, was the exception rather than the rule. For one Earl of Southampton or Halifax *The Trimmer*, there were ten Buckinghams and twenty Danbys willing by frankly corrupt methods to climb to power and enrich themselves. Under the premiership of Danby, who was to figure largely in Montagu's discreditable career, one-third of the House of Commons was regularly bribed, some with money and some with jobs, to vote as directed, though so worthless were their promises that they could never be guaranteed to earn their hire. An appreciable percentage of courtiers and politicians were on the payroll of the French, Dutch and Spanish Governments. From kings to lackeys, all were tarred with the same brush. Nor were the French much better. Their standards of honour and honesty were, to put it mildly, peculiar. Louis XIV., in his own estimation the perfect gentleman, never disappointed expectation by keeping his word when it suited him to break it.

In temperament, outlook and codes of morality most of the star performers at the English court of Charles II. were strangely alike, as though recruited from one and the same family. The make-up of the king and Ralph Montagu revealed as many points of similarity as of acute divergence, but the shared traits, if as plentiful, were much less conspicuous than the dissident. Though witty, jocular and somewhat of a tease, he had little of the king's incurable levity and cynical indifference to other people's comfort. He was industrious where it served his ambitions, and had an intense craving for wealth, but his materialistic conception of the style of living appropriate to one in his position was not without a tinge of idealism. Charles, burdened with no recognisable ideals, was for the most part indolent, and wholly bent on enjoying himself. In good-nature and equable temper there was nothing to choose between them, nor did they vary much in artistic and intellectual endowment, but when it came to practical generosity, such as extending a helping hand to indigent friends in no position ever to repay him, Charles cut a poor figure by the side of Montagu, who would never have been guilty of such worthless sentimentality as, "Don't let poor Nelly starve!" He would have provided for her in his will.

Of Montagu's kindness and hospitality to men of genius who had not benefited by his particular gift of getting on in the world, there is ample evidence. Such consideration for the great in soul was, indeed, a Montagu family characteristic, splendid enough to atone for many of their faults. If he acquired his money easily enough, and some of it, admittedly, through tainted channels, he could never be accused of putting it to ignoble use, as for example, like Charles, spending it on rapacious mistresses. The women friends he cultivated either did not expect, or at any rate did not receive, from him extravagant marks of appreciation, while the two he married brought him a tremendous accession of riches. He had admirable taste, and the houses he built, as well as the furniture and pictures with which he adorned them, showed him tender to a stately and ceremonious form of life that was in the best aristocratic tradition.

Nothing was more notorious than Charles's weakness for the companionship of mean flatterers, usually his intellectual inferiors. Montagu, on the other hand, took care to surround himself with men of culture, and his splendid mansion at Boughton, Northamptonshire, was the rendezvous of many choice spirits in the realm of art and letters. While on occasion a cunning dissembler, he never carried dissimulation to such a pitch, or into so many departments of life, as did the king, nor was it ever to become with him a settled habit. On the contrary, his frankness at times was astonishingly refreshing. Indeed, for a man who lived so dangerously, his reticences were strangely few, and if more often he had taken Machiavelli's advice of the open face and the closed mind, he would have avoided the principal crisis in his professional career—the quarrel with Charles due to his talking too freely to Lady Castlemaine.

His frankness extended to his large ambitions which he took no steps to hide. He wanted to be an Earl, a great Minister of State and a man of enormous possessions. With these far from modest aspirations, as one trebly conscious of his own merit, he expected his acquisitive and wholly

selfish world to be in entire sympathy. He shared to the full the Montagu genius for getting on, and in certain aspects of material success outshone all entitled to bear that historic and honoured name. Nay, he outstripped even his own expectations, finishing up a Duke, after marrying in turn the two wealthiest widows in England.

If he did not worship personal prosperity, he regarded it as the all-important goal in life ; hence he was delighted to marry his son John, subsequently 2nd Duke of Montagu, to Mary, youngest daughter of the Duke of Marlborough, who had attained the maximum degree of success. His greatest quality, which in large measure was to account for his rise to rank and fortune, was never to know when he was beaten. Pushed out of one door, he came in by another, undeterred by insults, denials, or any form of rebuff. He had the persistency of a law of nature.

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It is fortunate that Montagu was much addicted to letter-writing, and that a great part of the correspondence has survived, for frequently it is as starkly revealing of motives and character as are the entries in the diary of Pepys. That he was well aware of the risks which his daring outspokenness invited, might be gathered from the frequency of his requests to recipients of his letters, Charles not excepted, to burn them. He had no secrets from his astute sister, Elizabeth, Lady Harvey, who lived for him as much as Mme. de Sévigné did for her daughter, and unblushingly admonished her to keep on the right side of Charles, even if it meant exchanging courtesies with the Chiffinches, man and wife, who had the delicate task of superintending the king's amours.

The embarrassing frankness with which he discussed affairs with the cunning statesmen and politicians of his day was part of a carefully cultivated technique, designed to impress them with his belief in their goodwill towards him. Such benevolence, if reciprocated, as in his case, was, he never tired of urging, a salutary form of mutual insurance against the hazards and pitfalls of political life, from which even those most in favour with the king were not exempt. Lord Treasurer Danby found the doctrine of mutual benefits, as advanced by Montagu, not a little awkward, his own policy, acquired in the trickiest political school, being to take all and give nothing in return ; alternatively, to choose the men most amenable to his purpose and drop them when they had outlived their usefulness. Even a craftier man than Danby would have been hard-pressed to know how to deal with such a one as Montagu, who accompanied the most profusely-worded compliments with assurances of his wholehearted concern for the other's interests, while making it quite clear that the sooner tangible proof was forthcoming that the sentiments were mutual, the better it would be for both parties.

While ever careful to observe the distinctions attaching to superior rank and position, and unfailingly deferential to his chiefs in the Government, Montagu never lost an opportunity of convincing his colleagues that, just as he could be a good and grateful friend, so he could be a dangerous enemy. Only to his earliest patron, Buckingham, was he without sufficient cause to

prove ungrateful, and in fairness to Montagu it must be said that not even an angel could have agreed for long with so reckless, impulsive and changeable a creature. Otherwise it is true to say that Montagu never deserted an ally without considerable justification. To the end he remained faithful to Lord Arlington, for twelve years Charles's highly competent Secretary of State, though fate willed it that Arlington should be no help to him in his career. As for Lord Danby whose temporary ruin he brought about, not until he realised that that selfish statesman, so far from playing the game by him, was fully prepared to acquiesce in his fall, did he consider himself automatically released from any ties of loyalty, and resolve to strike. If it was a dastardly action, it could not be said to have been unprovoked.

Dullness was never a vice that could be placed to the account of Ralph Montagu. Whether in conversation or committing his thoughts to paper, he was equally entertaining. On the first occasion of his being Ambassador in Paris, his letters to Arlington were not the dull, correct missives of a dry-as-dust diplomatist, but the comments of a lively-minded, witty man of the world, with broad tastes and interests. The extracts[1] which follow may be taken as a fair measure of his quality :

May 3rd, 1669—Paris : I went to Martiall's [a famous Paris drapery establishment], and I saw a present which I am sure, must cost a thousand pound(s) packing up. I found since it was for my Lady Castlemaine, which you [Arlington] will quickly know there [London]. I asked him [Martiall] whom it was for, but he could not, or would not, tell me. I asked him who paid him ; he told me, the king of France, and that he had an order from M. Colbert [Louis's famous Finance Minister] for his money, to whom he is to give the things.

July 26th, 1669—Paris : The king [Louis XIV.] is the least beloved and esteemed by all his servants, even the nearest about him, that ever king in the world was, because of his ill-natured and proud usage of them upon all occasions. They have no way of complaining of it, as a very witty man told me the other day, but by extolling the king of England's using of people, which, they say, angers and vexes the French king more than anything they can say. He is the same to the women, except to one, as he is to the men, and a little while ago some ladies were a-commending the king of England before him. He appeared a little nettled at it, and said, *Les Dames ayment toujours les aventuriers, mais je ne me croy pas moins honeste homme pour n'avoir pas esté chassé de mon royaume.*[2]

September 28th, 1669—Paris : I could not well omit the condoling with you for the loss of my Lord Duke of Buckingham [he and Arlington had quarrelled]. I can only comfort you as the divines used to do for the loss of the good things of this world, which, whilst we did enjoy, were so uncertain that we ought never to have set our hearts much upon them.

[1] Buccleuch MSS.

[2] Women always love adventurers, but I do not credit myself with being any less a gentleman for not having been chased out of my kingdom.

August 13th, 1670—Paris: My Lord Duke of Buckingham is here . . . and is just now in his tailor's hands, fitting himself this night to go to St. Germains. The Comte de Gram[m]ont had been already to compliment from the king. There is a lodging furnished for him in the king's own house at St. Germains; one of the king's coaches and eight footmen ordered always to wait on him and a table to be kept for him whilst he is there, and there is no doubt but that all the honour that can be done to him will be done.

September 6th, 1670—Paris: The Duke . . . intending in a day or two to set out for England, and there being occasion of a much greater expense than the money he brought over will furnish to, I thought myself obliged both for the king's honour and for his, to serve him. . . . Sir Thomas Bond, upon my entreaty and personal security, has supplied him upon condition that Sir Stephen Fox or Alderman Backwell accept the bills that my Lord Duke shall draw upon them.

December 11th, 1670—Paris: As for the affairs of this Court, Mme. de Montespan [Louis's latest mistress] and her friends are in the greatest power; the government of Guienne is given to the Mareschal D'Albret, her great friend, and the marriage of M. de Nevers to her niece have given her so much credit that the Ministers themselves make court to her.

February 14th, 1671—Paris: The town is filled with the discourse of the retiring of the Duchesse de la Vallière, who on Ash Wednesday morning went into the monastery at Challiot, and writ a letter to the king that she had left all her jewels and whatever she had received from him [as his mistress], desiring no other favours from him but the liberty of continuing there. The king sent the Mareschal de Bellefonds twice to persuade her to come back, but could not prevail. At last he sent M. Colbert, who brought her that night to Versailles—whether it is to continue there nobody yet knows.[1]

Genuinely interested in his friends' well-being, Montagu was never afraid to speak his mind, thereby giving a piquant as well as a sympathetic quality to his utterances. What could afford a better insight into the miserable married life of *Madame*, Charles II.'s sister, than this one expressive sentence?: "If she [*Madame*] had married a country gentleman in England of five thousand pounds a year, she would have lived a better life than she does here [Paris], for *Monsieur* [the Duc d'Orléans, brother of Louis XIV.] though he be a very wise prince, doth, as Sir Daniel [Harvey[2]] used to, take a pleasure to cross his wife in everything."

With Montagu the faculty of being entertaining was not limited to talk and correspondence. Usually he managed to involve himself in extraordinary adventures that set all society gossiping or gaping in wonderment. His matrimonial exploits were no less conducive to excited chatter than his

[1] The Duchesse de la Vallière, most unselfish and deserving of Louis's mistresses, who truly loved him, decided to resume her cloistered life.

[2] Sir Daniel Harvey was the husband of Elizabeth, Ralph's sister.

passages with the frail and susceptible ladies of his day, who bowed to his inconsiderable physical graces. "And how," asked Louis XIV. of a courtier, "do you make love?"—"Sire," was the answer, "I don't make it; I buy it ready-made."[1]

Montagu's encounters with the fair sex were never cut-and-dried affairs. They were always preceded by some form of wooing or courtship, for unlike Buckingham, Henry Sidney or M. de Chatillon [the last-named on one occasion his rival] who relied on their good looks to plead their cause, he had to depend on such assets as his personal charm, pertinacity, nimble wit and power of address.[2] With the odds all against him, he secured as his first wife the widowed Lady Northumberland, young, rich, beautiful and in every way desirable. His second wife, the widowed Duchess of Albemarle, richer by far but hopelessly insane, particularly on the point of her blue-bloodedness, he captured by posing as the Emperor of China. Such versatility betokened no ordinary man. As was postulated at the outset, if he was a knave, he was decidedly an amusing and exceptionally resourceful variant of the species.

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Like his uncle, the Abbot Walter Montagu, he was a second son, and like him early recognised that in the shaping of his career he would largely have to depend on his own efforts. Of the two, Ralph started with fewer advantages, since his father, the religious-minded 2nd Lord Montagu, thought more of exchanging texts with the Puritan 2nd Earl of Manchester and of building churches, than in promoting the interests of his sons at the ungodly Court, from which he had deliberately alienated himself. Much more shrewd and far-seeing, if no less liable to acts of folly, than his brother Edward, whose tragically early death he had no reason to anticipate, he came under the favourable notice of Charles at a time when the king was still appreciative of the services rendered him by the Montagues at the Restoration. Towards the end of 1662, when he was just 24, he was entrusted with the pleasant mission of conveying important letters from the king to his sister [*Madame*], and to Louis. Secrecy as to the contents of the letters being absolutely vital, the mission assumed more than ordinary significance.

Charles had come to the conclusion that though Parliament and people were opposed to a French alliance, it would pay him to be on terms of close friendship with Louis XIV., a personal monarch whose independence he yearned to emulate. The letter to his sister invoked her aid in shaping the desired *entente*, while the letter to Louis suggested that *Madame* might be a better intermediary than any Ambassador in a discussion of their respective interests. Off and on, Montagu was destined to have a prolonged, and in the later stages thoroughly discreditable, association with the French Court, marked the second time he was Ambassador by dishonourable chaffering on the part of the king for England's neutrality, and on his own part by acts of folly and treachery which were to culminate in his temporary downfall.

[1] *Le Tableau de Paris*, by Louis Sébastien Mercier.
[2] *Grammont Memoirs*.

Charles's nicely-mannered messenger was well received by *Madame*, delighted to have the latest English news retailed by a young, witty and informed courtier. Montagu, whose welcome by Louis likewise left little to be desired, returned in February, 1663, overjoyed with his experience and full of admiration for the gaiety and magnificence of the French court. Particularly he was impressed by the splendour of the jewels and costumes displayed at a *bal masque* given on January 31st (1663) by *Madame*, at which even the austere queen-mother, Anne of Austria, consented to appear masked. Always the showy and opulent trappings of life were to attract him, though as he grew older his fancy shed some of its garishness and grew in refinement.

Announcing Montagu's safe homecoming, Charles, for the benefit of his sister, indulged in a little gentle raillery at that young gentleman's expense. "I wonder," he said, "*Monsieur* would let him stay with you so long, for he is undoubtedly in love with you. But I ought not to complain, [he] having given me a very fine sword and belt, which I do not believe was out of pure liberality, but because I am your brother."[1] There being no further opening for his talents, Montagu had to be content with the minor post of Master of the Horse to the Duchess of York. However, on his brother's death, he was transferred in a similar capacity to Queen Catherine, not so much in acknowledgment of any particular merit of his own, as because the Duchess wanted room made for Henry Sidney, her tender admirer,[2] "the handsomest fellow in the kingdom", and to hear him boast, invincible with women, though according to Macky he was drunk once a day. Even so, had not the Duchess cajoled her husband, busy with his own love-affairs, into pressing for the change, Montagu would probably not have been promoted, for the king was by no means enamoured of the idea. He still remembered the hand-squeezing incident which had led to Edward Montagu's downfall, and wondered whether the weakness might not extend to the brother.

It was not Montagu's intention to be marooned in a purely ornamental job, and taking the line that it might be just as easy to get a first-class as a second-rate appointment, he boldly put in a claim for the Paris Ambassadorship, for which in 1662, Lord Arlington, now Secretary of State and Charles's most influential adviser, had striven in vain. Consequently the measure of Montagu's ambition, or rather audacity, can be appreciated. Thanks to the influence of his sister Elizabeth, Lady Harvey, who had closely allied herself with the Duchess of Buckingham, he was on the most amiable terms with the scheming Duke, her husband, who with perhaps pardonable error mistook him for a potentially pliant tool. Buckingham promised his support and was as good as his word. Twice he appealed to the king to appoint Montagu. The first time the king asked the Duke whether he did not consider his nominee too young, and the second time, with curious inconsistency, inquired what he thought of Lord Sunderland, who was two years younger.

[1] *Charles II. and Madame*, by C. H. Hartmann.

[2] The intrigue eventually was to lead to his disgrace, but in 1678, by the influence of his nephew, the Earl of Sunderland, he was restored to favour. Master of the Robes, he was in 1679 appointed to succeed Godolphin as English envoy at The Hague.

Buckingham, usually well able to hold his own in an argument of this sort, induced the king to drop Sunderland, but failed to persuade him to say "Yes" to Montagu's appointment. So, as a last resource, Montagu appealed to Arlington, and his intervention, supported by the Cabal as a whole, proved decisive.[1]

Whereas Buckingham's interest in Montagu had been excited by the idea of gaining a useful tool, Arlington's favour had been won by the conviction that this energetic and highly intelligent young man, just thirty, was likely to develop into a most useful ally. It was never safe, in Restoration times, to bank on the gratitude of an obvious careerist, but Arlington, who prided himself on his psychological insight, felt that in Montagu's case he was justified in taking the risk. The decision was one he would have no cause to regret.

Montagu's good fortune upset all calculations. When some weeks before, he told Sir William Temple that he designed to be the next Ambassador to France, that accomplished diplomat, aware that neither the king nor the Duke of York had any liking for him, could only murmur, "How can that be?" Sensing what was passing in Temple's mind, Montagu tartly replied that whatever their feelings had been, now the royal pair would behave as if they loved him. On the unexpected happening, Temple could only put it down to the ladies, "who were always his [Montagu's] best friends for some secret perfections that were hid from the rest of the world."[2]

In Paris, where the aristocracy made pleasure a duty, Montagu felt he was in his appropriate sphere. But being very much in earnest about his future, he was careful not to prejudice himself by acquiring too early a frivolous reputation. As he wanted to be taken at his own valuation, he spared no expense to make his public entry into the city, which took place on April 21st, 1669, as spectacular and imposing as possible, and, by common consent, achieved a considerable triumph. He sat with Louis, having in his train fifty gentlemen, six pages and twelve footmen. His two coaches followed the king's, but in front of the queen's, thus avoiding any dispute as to precedence.[3] Thirty years later his cousin, the 1st Duke of Manchester, on being transferred from Venice, would show by his own brave display that such pomp and magnificence were to be expected from the Montagues.

Two days after his ceremonial entry into Paris, Montagu, with an eye to history, modernised the spelling of his name. Thereafter he signed himself not R. Mountagu as formerly, but R. Montagu, which mode of spelling, sometimes varied with a final e, communicated itself to all branches of the family.

He started his ambassadorial career with one distinct advantage; he was fully aware of the importance attached by France to winning England over to her side, and thus rupturing the Triple Alliance, which alone stood between France and her territorial ambitions. "As long as the king keeps to the Triple Alliance," he assured Arlington, "they will not know what to

[1] Buccleuch MSS., Vol. I.
[2] Lord Dartmouth's Note to Burnet.
[3] Dispatches by Wm. Perwich, English Agent at Paris.

do here." His line, fully endorsed by the Secretary of State, who was opposed to the expansionist aims of French policy, was not to truckle to Louis, but rather by keeping that monarch's predatory designs in check to make an understanding possible. To this end he sought to convince Hugues de Lionne, the able and astute French Foreign Minister, that by placing England and France on more equal terms, the Triple Alliance, which owed so much to Arlington's statesmanship, created the only conditions in which a proud and stout-hearted nation such as the English could form a close union with France. Whatever his subsequent faults, Montagu, by the lofty view he now took of English power, as well as by his efforts to ease conditions for our woollen merchants trading with France (thereby relieving the unfavourable balance of trade), was entitled to all praise.

He proved his loyalty to Arlington firstly by persuading the French that the latter was no enemy of theirs, and secondly by ridding *Madame* of the impression that the Secretary, by his inability to answer some of her letters, was deliberately slighting her. Once cordial relations were restored, Montagu and Arlington combined to persuade Charles to pay his sister part at least of the dowry voted her by Parliament, which he had applied to his own use.

By combining flattery and coaxing Montagu insinuated himself into *Madame's* good graces, though originally she had taken him to be merely the passive instrument of Arlington's will; and by calculated indiscretions intended to suggest implicit trustfulness, he strengthened his relations with Arlington. Thus, he remarked to the Secretary that if after all the latter had done for her she still remained unfriendly, then she could rightly be considered the falsest creature in the world—bold speech which, if it reached Charles's ears, would have meant Montagu's downfall. In his letter dated May 8th, 1669, he reminded Arlington that he was quite conscious of the risks he ran by such freedom of speech, "which, perhaps, the king would not like if he sees."[1]

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Wholly lacking in Montagu was the bump of reverence for the commonplace, in the hands of a cunning courtier often a useful asset. He was not overawed by position or rank, unless accompanied by concrete signs of greatness. He might, and indeed did, pay lip-service to royalty, but when he allowed himself to be drawn, he was no more sparing of them than of ordinary mortals. His particular aversion was to Henrietta Maria, whom he looked upon simply as an old woman of mischievous tendencies meddling in matters best left alone, and keeping up a state which, in view of the poverty of the Stuarts, was no less than preposterous. For which reason he shared the opinion of *Madame* that it was a shame her mother could not live upon what she had, without demanding extra supplies from the king. As for the people attached to her court, he regarded them as complete parasites: "My Lord St. Albans can live by his wits and by play, and what matter is it whether Peircy Church, Mrs. Bruncard and a great many other

[1] Buccleuch MSS., Vol. I. *Arlington Papers*. Unless otherwise stated, all Montagu-Arlington references belong to this invaluable source.

such creatures have their pensions paid ? All the French think it is ridiculous, at a time when we are thought so poor in England, to have so much money spent abroad." Admirable sentiments which would have come much better from one less bent on getting all he could for himself.

To begin with, Louis XIV. no more impressed him than Henrietta Maria, and even when he professed to change his opinion, he was merely dissembling for interested motives. He rated the French king inferior in charm and good-nature to Charles, and thought it a great disadvantage that Louis was so much less accessible and genial. Nor could he reconcile himself to Louis's habit at an audience of always having a Minister posted in the room. The French Ministers, from Colbert to Lionne, earned his contempt because, despite their great abilities, they knew no more of England than they did of Persia. As a rule he got on better with the French women than with the men, for, as John Wilkes was to boast later, he could talk away his face in half an hour.

A fault which Montagu shared with many of his class was to judge a person's ability according to whether or not he liked him. He did not care for Colbert, hence could only pick holes in him. "A vain pedant apt to talk nonsense," was how he summed up the brilliant financial administrator who found money for Louis's costly wars, as well as for his extravagant building schemes, notably Versailles.

He was interested in Louis's mistresses only insofar as they influenced policy, foreign or domestic. The few allusions he permitted himself to make to the rise and fall of the different favourites showed that all his sympathies were with the Duchesse de la Vallière, and entirely withdrawn from the greedy, self-seeking Mme. de Montespan who had displaced her. France may have found the competition of the women for Louis's favour an absorbing comedy, but it left Montagu cold.

With frivolity so prevalent among the well-to-do classes, there was a temptation for rakish Englishmen to behave as though Paris and London were one and the same city, sometimes with regrettable results. One evening in July, 1669, Lord William Cavendish, eldest son of the Earl of Devonshire, accompanied among others by the Earl of Rochester, presented himself at the stage of the Opera. Several French officers the worse for drink resented the intrusion and attacked Cavendish, who was only saved by the presence of mind of a servant of Montagu's in pushing him into the pit below. Louis, on hearing of the incident, profusely apologised to Montagu, and would have imprisoned the officers, had not Cavendish and Rochester begged him not to do so.

It irked Montagu, otherwise delighted with his appointment, not to be consulted as to policy either by the king or Arlington, and merely expected to act as mouthpiece of Charles, from whom all the initiative emanated. Furthermore, unless he were prepared to run the risk of being snubbed by his royal master, he must confine his advice to specified issues, such as the amount of money that could be extracted from France for the king's benefit. He was not even a party to the secret negotiations which preceded the notorious Treaty of Dover with its Catholicising policy for England, being less trusted than his uncle, the Abbot Walter Montagu, whom he affected

RALPH, 1ST DUKE OF MONTAGU

ENTRANCE TO MONTAGU HOUSE
(After a sketch by N. Rooker, 1778, in the British Museum)

to despise.[1] Only when the treaty was signed, sealed and delivered, was he admitted into part of the secret, and that the least dangerous: Charles's promise to join Louis in a Dutch war. Inappropriately enough, his informant was not the king or the Secretary of State, but *Madame*, desirous of thus testifying to her personal esteem for him. It was the man, and not the Ambassador, who was acknowledged.

As for the Second Treaty (*Traité Simulé*, to apply the French description) which carefully omitted all reference to Charles avowing himself a Catholic, he had to thank M. Lionne[2] for his enlightenment, a circumstance scarcely calculated to raise his credit with the French. Even in the matter of the trade discussions which he had a right to regard as his particular province, he had to give way as negotiator to Buckingham already in the pay of Louis, and therefore ill-qualified to secure the best results for England. Deeply commiserating with our merchants, Montagu would have much more effectively championed their cause, and the feeling that his abilities were being wasted led him to make a mild protest. He was sure, he told Arlington, that he was considered no less skilled a negotiator than his opposite, the French Ambassador in London.

This remark leads us to suspect that when he proceeded to define the part of an Ambassador he was just indulging in mockery. It was not to offer an opinion as to what was best, a task for wiser and more experienced men, but to be a spy and a tell-tale; wherefore, contrary to his inclination and practice, he felt obliged to tell all he heard and learnt in France. He might have added that the business of an Ambassador was to conceal the real intentions of his country and hoodwink its probable enemies. At any rate he proceeded in the same breath to compliment Arlington on the way he had fooled the Dutch, who had not the slightest suspicion of the pending blow, while taking credit to himself for a cunning display of friendliness which had kept the Dutch Ambassador in Paris in the same fool's paradise.

To prove his competence in his master's business, he advised M. Lionne to put the money to be provided by Louis into Spanish pistoles. These, concealed in packets of merchandise, should be conveyed to Whitehall by water. If the money were sent in the form of bills of exchange, as proposed by the French, it was certain the Dutch, who had eyes and ears all over the world, would find out—all of which talk, if Arlington's nicer feelings had not been entirely corrupted by Charles, must have given him a wholesome distaste for the business of subsidies, or, to give them their proper name, bribes.

Besides pulling wool over the eyes of the Dutch Ambassador, Montagu seemed to have got at Louvois, the French War Minister, by bribing his handsome mistress, Madame de Fresnoy, whom he approached through her sister, with whom, as he told Arlington, he [Montagu] formerly had a private commerce, a phrase culled from the vocabulary of gallantry which scarcely calls for elaboration. For the services rendered he promised the one a jewel worth two thousand crowns, and the other a jewel worth three times as much, or, if she preferred it, the money equivalent. He proposed,

[1] See Chapter II, *The Religious Schemer.*
[2] *Montagu-Arlington Papers.*

if the king approved, to borrow the money in two months' bills drawn on Sir Stephen Fox.

Such slim tactics were part of the normal stock-in-trade of an Ambassador in that unscrupulous age, and it should be held to the credit, rather than to the detriment, of Montagu, that in cunning and rascality he was more than a match for his tricky French *confrères*. He was a knave with all his wits about him, determined, like Rob Roy, never to be taken unarmed. As a further precaution he arranged, in the person of his astute sister, Lady Harvey, to have his own private spy and tell-tale. Her business was to keep him in touch with affairs in England, so that he might be sufficiently abreast of events to take advantage of opportune developments. Quite soon, through this source, he heard of the engagement of Arlington's infant daughter to Henry Fitzroy, afterwards Duke of Grafton, "least doubtful and best-loved" of Charles's children by Lady Castlemaine,[1] whose objections to the match had been overruled. Convinced that Arlington's star was still in the ascendant, he hastened to tender his congratulations; his admiration for the Secretary's cleverness doubly increased by this latest evidence of brilliant scheming.

Arlington was his ideal of the successful politician—competent in affairs, adroit with both friend and foe, and rich enough to live in a state worthy of the king's most trusted Minister. The Secretary's wealth particularly impressed him. He, too, would like to have a town mansion comparable with Goring House [subsequently the site of Buckingham Palace] and a country palace as palatial as Euston, Suffolk, scene of great junketings. More than Arlington's six thousand-a-year as Secretary were needed to provide such amenities, and so for the first time Montagu's mind began to play with the idea of marrying money as the quickest and surest way of reaching his goal—affluence and power combined. Without money, he had long since decided, one got nowhere. Hence on the slightest pretext he demanded various sums from the king or his Minister, and on the flimsiest grounds invited grants.

A favourite device of his was to plead poverty induced by overspending in the country's interests, his official salary being inadequate to the expenses of his office. He was successful to the point of being allowed £1,000 from the prizes. This merely whetted his appetite for more, and he kept on asking, on the principle that if he were persistent enough he was bound to be rewarded to the extent of part at least of his hopes. The honour of being a Privy Councillor was a modest instalment of what he rightly held to be his due, and that honour he screwed out of Charles by alternately bombarding him and the Secretary with his demands. The king was used to being dunned by needy or self-seeking courtiers, but to be attacked in this persistent fashion by one who was impervious to snubs, insults and suggestive periods of silence, was a new experience for him. Rather than submit to a continuance of the unpleasant ordeal, he capitulated by admitting Montagu into the Privy Council, hoping that would be the end of the Ambassador's importunities.

How little Charles knew his man! Montagu had no intention of leaving

[1] Betrothed August 1st, 1672, remarried November 6th, 1679.

the king alone. He had set his heart upon extorting out of Charles three outstanding favours: (1) a Commissioner's place in the Treasury which, as he explained, would mean an absolute settling of his fortune, enfeebled by the debts of his late [hand-squeezing] brother, his father's unwise liberality, and his own heavy expenditure as Ambassador; (2) an earldom for his father, in fulfilment of a promise made long before by Charles, who had remembered others with less reason for recognition; (3) the Order of the Garter, the request for which was fortified by a recommendation from Louis XIV., wishful to oblige the Ambassador. But in respect of none of these demands could Montagu make any headway, even though he were helped by the lukewarm support of Arlington. The plain fact was that Charles believed he had done quite enough for Montagu, to whom he had never warmed, instinctively suspecting his professions of zeal to be overdone.

If only the earldom for his father had been granted, Montagu might have felt reasonably satisfied. "All my enemies give out I am disgraced," he exclaimed in a petulant outburst for Arlington's benefit. "All my friends believe it, and with some reason when they see His Majesty is not kind enough . . . to make good a promise." The annoying part of the business was that if old Lord Montagu had himself asked for the earldom, in all likelihood it would have been granted, for Charles, in view of his obligations to the Montagu family, would have found it difficult to say "No". But that sturdy and independent peer wanted nothing of Charles, and would go to any length to rob the king of an excuse for recalling him to that sink of iniquity, Whitehall. As for the Commissionership, the king no doubt argued that Montagu was already handsomely provided for by having the revenue of the Great Wardrobe. This, on August 12th, 1671, he had purchased from his cousin, the Earl of Sandwich, for £14,000, though it was worth a minimum of £3,000 a year.

It was unfortunate for the Ambassador that *Madame* died before he was able to benefit from her goodwill towards him. He had helped her in various monetary difficulties, and she had wished her brother the king to make an appropriate return. But once the generous Princess was in her grave, her recommendations meant nothing to Charles. It was to Montagu, a grief-stricken attendant at her bedside at St. Cloud, that she had confided what was almost her last request. She was dying and grieved to think that her brother the king was losing the one who loved him best. He was to tell the king that whatever advice she had given him had been for his honour and advantage, and not for her own interests. She had always loved him better than life itself, and now her one regret in dying was to be leaving him. That the deeply-affected Ambassador should miss none of her words she repeated them over and over again, he bending down to spare her the least strain. When she had finished speaking, she drew off her finger a favourite ring and bade Montagu be sure to let her brother have it.

Montagu's first idea, to which his detestation of *Madame's* husband, the Duc d'Orléans, lent force, was that she had been poisoned, but the autopsy established the cause of death as acute peritonitis due to duodenal ulcer.[1] Writing to Arlington a month later, Montagu enclosed the letter written a

[1] *Charles II. and Madame*, by C. H. Hartmann.

few hours before *Madame* died, which though intended for her cousin, the Princess Palatine, he felt sure the king would be glad to see " because it is so well writ, and does also give an exact account of everything that concerns her ".

This was the second bereavement sustained by the House of Stuart to which Montagu had had to address himself, though the death of the queen-mother had not caused him any particular pangs. In the one case he felt fate had been needlessly, senselessly, cruel ; in the other, if anything, over-kind, releasing from suffering a lady who saw no particular object in living.

Of the two the death of the queen-mother was to involve Montagu in the more onerous labours. He took particular trouble and care to ensure that the more valuable of her possessions were not commandeered by her son-in-law, the Duc d'Orléans, but safely transferred to Charles. Moreover, knowing how much the king appreciated handsome and artistic furnishings, and being somewhat of a connoisseur himself, he saved for His Majesty some fine pieces of crimson and gold brocade which could be made into a bed complete with alcove hangings. Rather unpatriotically he suggested that the work should be done in France ; the cost would be less and the workmanship better. His idea was that the bed should be made up with a rich gold fringe campane and lined with a slight cloth of gold ; what was over could serve as hangings for the king's own little bedchamber where he dressed himself. Trifling though the transaction may seem, it is valuable for the light it throws on Montagu's passion for beautiful things.

The Ambassador's motive in seeking to please Charles was so obvious as to defeat its own object. More than this service was needed to win from the king the coveted Garter, with which even Arlington had not yet been honoured. To have asked for it was unexampled audacity, but to have brought in Louis's name was something worse : it was sheer folly. Nor was it long before a hint of the king's displeasure was conveyed to Montagu, who had reckoned upon the decoration as a tribute to his Ambassadorship, soon to draw to a close.

Montagu took the royal rebuke with ill grace. " In all things that concern my person or my fortune," he remarked to Arlington, " the king has showed me so little favour or goodness (and yet I know not why, for I have never displeased him) that I am obliged to take hold of . . . somebody's recommendation that he considers, for upon my own account I can never expect His Majesty will think I deserve anything." Having rid his bosom of this perilous stuff, Montagu, with characteristic pertinacity, returned to the charge. In the spring of 1672, on the eve of his departure from Paris, where he was being succeeded by Lord Sunderland, originally suggested for the post, he had another shot at the Commissionership. He failed again. Arlington, whose position was being assiduously undermined by Buckingham, could do nothing for him, and Montagu, rightly diagnosing the situation, acquitted him of blame.

But money he must have. Never had he been so financially embarrassed. Indeed, it was want of funds that compelled him to discontinue the Ambassadorship. Though he, of all people, should not have been caught napping, he had been involved in the infamous Stop of the Exchequer [January,

1672].[1] His considerable losses [later partly made up] detained him in London a considerable time.[2] He had imagined that the king, sympathising with him in his plight, would have offered him the first vacant sinecure, but he had overrated Charles's benevolence.

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Forced to look elsewhere than the king for sources of replenishment, he harked back to the old idea of a wealthy marriage, relegating his other ambitions to cold storage for the time being. Since he could bring an undivided mind to the quest, he did not think the task of capturing his heiress would unduly tax his powers. It was easy to guess who his quarry would be. Of all the available heiresses he picked on the most charming, as well as the most richly endowed, both as to wealth and lineage. Than Elizabeth Wriothesley, daughter of the great Earl of Southampton, Charles II.'s first Lord Treasurer, and widow of Joceline, 11th Earl of Northumberland, no ambitious diplomat in that year of grace, 1672, could have hoped for a more attractive consort. She had almost everything to commend her: youth—she was only 24—physical beauty, personal fascination, property in her own right, plus an income of £6,000 a year derived from her maternal grandfather, the Earl of Chichester, and last, but not least, an affectionate nature. When only 15 she had, in accordance with the fashion for early marriages, become the wife of the sickly 18-year-old son and heir of the 10th Earl of Northumberland, who had previously been betrothed to Lady Audrey Wriothesley, her sister, fated to die during the courtship.

Lord Percy came into the Earldom in 1668, and to console his wife, saddened by the loss of their firstborn, a son, and to distract his own thoughts, set out on a Continental tour, during which it was Montagu's good fortune and privilege as Paris Ambassador to render them certain services, such as assisting them to acquire at a suitable rental a Paris residence—*l'Hostel de Basionère*—formerly the residence of Henrietta Maria, and bringing to book the French Customs officials who had arbitrarily seized the Earl's horses. Leaving his young wife in charge of John Locke, the philosopher, who was acting as medical adviser to the Percy family, Lord Northumberland passed on to Italy. At Turin, on his way back, he was seized with malignant fever [presumably pneumonia] and died on May 21st, 1670. The young widow, almost prostrate under her double bereavement—loss of husband and son—escorted the body to England, where, mainly owing to the difficulties arising out of the settlement of her affairs, she was detained until the autumn of 1672.[3] The word, "detained", is used advisedly, since it was necessity rather than choice that kept her chained to England, being obliged constantly to see the domineering Dowager Lady Northumberland, whom she had little reason to love.

A more waspish mother-in-law than the widow of Algernon Percy, 10th

[1] Charles, instead of paying the interest on his debt to the bankers and goldsmiths, who had loaned him their clients' money, used the funds to finance the war with Holland, to which the discreditable Treaty of Dover committed him.

[2] Christie's *Shaftesbury*.

[3] *Dispatches of Wm. Perwich*: "Paris, Oct. 5, 1672. Last night came hither the Countess of Northumberland, but her stay will be very short."

Earl, could hardly be found in the whole of England. Daughter of the 2nd Earl of Suffolk, she had many of the characteristics of her aunt, the evil-minded Frances Howard, Countess of Somerset, poisoner and adulteress; not least her insufferable vanity. "The devill of a woman",[1] to repeat a contemporary jibe, she never went out of doors without a footman walking bareheaded on either side of her coach, and other coaches following with her female attendants[2]; never, without first being very humbly asked, allowed her son's wife, though the daughter of an Earl, to be seated in her presence; rarely corrected the women members of her household, save in the manner prescribed by Catharine de' Medici, that is by applying corporeal punishment.[3] But what from the sweet-mannered daughter-in-law's point of view was her worst fault, was her persistent and irritating interference with the grandchild, Lady Elizabeth Percy, future inheritress of the vast ancestral Percy estates. This interference at times reached the level of malignant persecution.

But there were other sources of annoyance. The daughter-in-law was that rarity in Restoration days, a highborn lady on cordial terms with Charles, who valued her good name above all else, and knew how to preserve it. She was human enough to be amused by some of the antics at court, but she drew the line at the efforts of the king to entangle her in a closer intimacy. She had no wish to be his mistress, his sister-in-law, that is wife to the widowed Duke of York, a suggestion much canvassed in court circles, or mother-in-law of one of his illegitimate sons. The king's friends scouted the possibility of so virtuous a lady demeaning herself to the level of Lady Castlemaine, but were less sure about the other parts of the royal scheme. Typical of what was being said was this piece of gossip embodied in the *Life* of James II.: "July 13, 1672. Buckingham proposed to the king, if he would break off the marriage with Lord Harry [the king's natural son created Duke of Grafton in 1675] and Arlington's daughter, to get the Lady Percy [Lady Northumberland's daughter] for Lord Harry. The king answered that it was too late, the other being concluded. Buckingham at the same time offered to the Countess of Northumberland to get the king to consent that she should command the Duke of York to marry her."[4]

Buckingham never could keep a secret, which explains why he was not entrusted with the details of the secret Treaty of Dover, and his drunken remarks connecting the Countess and the Duke of York must have reached the ears of that redoubtable lady-killer, Henry Sidney, who proceeded to tease Lady Northumberland's sister, the devout Lady Rachel Russell, with an imaginary picture of what was happening: "Lady Northumberland is grown so flippant since her adventure at Court (?) of which she has already informed your ladyship, that now she trips it every day in St. James's Park, meets the person you wot of [the Duke of York] and ogles and curtsies do pass at that rate that her friends, knowing not what to make of it, only pray that her honour may be safe."[5]

Of the inconveniences of her widowhood, nothing had been so intolerable

[1] W. Harbord to the Earl of Essex.
[2] State Papers, Domestic, Charles II., November 14th, 1674. *Essex Papers*, Vol. I.
[3] *History of the House of Percy.*
[4] *Macpherson State Papers*, Vol. I, p. 67.
[5] *Letters of Rachel, Lady Russell.*

as the lamentable behaviour of William Seymour, the twenty-one-year-old 3rd Duke of Somerset, who took her refusal to marry him so much to heart that he lost the will to live. At least that was the story his no doubt baffled medical attendants gave out, which story *Seager's Baronage* telescoped into the expressive phrase, "died from the unkindness shown him by Lady Northumberland". Small wonder, then, that the poor, much-badgered lady was only too glad to turn her back on England, and seek the hospitality of a capital where lovers, on being repulsed, were not inconsiderate enough to die, as it were, at her feet.

Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. No sooner had she arrived in Paris than Montagu, a free-lance now that he was relieved of the duties of Ambassador, presented himself in the rôle of sympathetic friend, anxious to place at her disposal his specialised knowledge of France. She was grateful for his polite attentions, which were not made alarming by any show of tenderness, Montagu being too cunning a tactician to spoil his plans by unduly rushing matters. His was to be the method of the slow, almost imperceptible siege, with an outer defence stormed at widely separated intervals.

To have any chance of success, a suitor, from the moment that his real intentions were suspected, had not only to retain her confidence, but so thoroughly command her affections as to reconcile her to the loss of the guardianship of her only child, the Lady Betty Percy, the penalty of re-marrying. That performance, a veritable *tour-de-force*, everybody save Montagu, whom difficulties only spurred on to greater efforts, regarded as a hopeless proposition. There was no escape from the cruel alternative of continuing a widow or handing over her daughter to the care of the hateful grandmother, the Dowager Lady Northumberland. It was a condition which Earl Joceline, when bequeathing the vast Percy estates to his young daughter, had imposed without meaning to be unkind to his young wife, whom he dearly loved; but in his anxiety to protect his child, he had unwittingly penalised the mother.

In the circumstances, the Countess, unwilling to part with her daughter, and still more unwilling to transfer her to the custody of that dreaded termagant, the grandmother, had made up her mind to face constant widowhood. Only a man of Montagu's pertinacity, cool assurance, and, it must be added, superb aplomb, would have had the hardihood to believe he could shake this gracious lady's resolution—induce her to sacrifice for his sake these overwhelmingly strong maternal feelings. Yet there were times when even he was appalled by the difficulty of his task, and yearned for the encouragement of a tender word or a promising smile. He put his trust largely in gaining her gratitude by a multitude of minor services, none of particular importance, but cumulatively of considerable benefit to her. He spared her, for instance, the ordeal of battling with a horde of fussy French officials, and he saw that her travelling, especially the journey to Aix, her winter rendezvous, was done in comfort and style. Probably his most effective manœuvre was to find a plausible excuse for being himself in Aix: he was breaking his journey to Italy, where he proposed taking a long contemplated holiday.

It is reasonable to suppose that Lady Northumberland was not at all displeased to have the company for a few days of so well-informed and amusing a friend, though even to her consciously obtuse understanding it must by now have been clear that there was purpose and design in his attentions. However, nothing happened to change the situation. She still remained consecrated to widowhood, treating all Montagu's efforts to induce her to alter her mind with the composure of one quite sure of herself. Meanwhile, he kept on talking of his departure for Italy, and on January 16th, 1673, in a letter to Arlington, spoke of omitting Rome from his itinerary, lest the reason for his journey be misunderstood. Obviously he did not want people to be saying that, following the example of his uncle, the Abbot, he was going over to Rome.

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Whether he ever reached Italy is extremely doubtful, history being strangely silent as to his movements during the weeks that followed. The probability is that he never budged far from Aix, a supposition borne out by their almost simultaneous return to Paris, openly on her part, inconspicuously, almost furtively, on his, as if he counted on working in the dark. If so, he was sadly mistaken, for the first thing he discovered was that all fashionable Paris was discussing him and his supposed pursuit of the desirable widow.

Most energetic of the gossip-mongers was his delightful and cultured friend, Mme. de la Fayette, one of the most gifted women of the day, who though devoted to the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, author of the famous Maxims, viewed with jealousy and a certain amount of alarm the attempts of other women to monopolise the ex-Ambassador. *Le beau Montagu* being the most interesting of the foreigners in Paris, she had no wish to see him marched off either by a wife or a mistress. That he was laying siege to Lady Northumberland she had heard from the Duc, and he, in turn, from the new English Ambassador, Lord Sunderland, greatly embarrassed by having had no acknowledgement of the letters he had sent on to her.

At first Mme. de la Fayette, relying on rumour rather than exact information, had been disposed to think that *Lord*(?) Montagu's[1] journey to Aix had ended in failure, and that the decision to visit Italy was intended to show that he was moved by other inducements than Lady Northumberland's fine eyes. But she was not sure what was in the wind. To resolve her doubts, she invited her knowledgeable friend, Mme. de Sévigné, to offer an opinion, and also prophesy how the affair with the Countess was likely to end. Her letter was dated December 30th, 1672, since when neither time nor Montagu had stood still.

Though, outwardly, there was nothing to show he had made any progress, yet he could congratulate himself on a perceptible thawing in Lady Northumberland's manner towards him, if not to his implied suit. And, indeed, even a more stern-minded lady would have found it hard to resist the entertainment provided by this amusing cavalier, whose conversation was spiced with wit and most piquant titbits of gossip, nobody being spared,

[1] The French were very fond of giving all distinguished Englishmen titles.

not even Charles. Although she shrank from acknowledging the unenviable truth, she was a lonely woman, and Montagu in increasing measure had helped to fill the void in her existence. Somehow or other, when she was with him, she felt more confident of her ability to defy the ogress in London. But if her youth rejoiced at the numerous opportunities for tête-à-tête meetings with Montagu that Paris provided, her fears, reinforced by the nightmarish prospect of being separated from her daughter, urged with some insistence their strict limitation. The winter passed with the conflict undetermined, nor did spring, when Paris begins to look her loveliest, bring any decision.

That Montagu was encountering heavy weather in his courtship was not hidden from the prying eyes of Mme. de la Fayette, who, egged on by insatiable curiosity determined to pay Lady Northumberland a courtesy visit (which was duly returned), as the best and quickest means of ascertaining how matters stood. When next Mme. de la Fayette wrote to Mme. de Sévigné, she had provided herself with just the piquant material to appeal to that charming gossiper. She had talked a great deal about the Countess to Montagu, and he had unequivocally declared himself ready to serve her (a polite way of describing his readiness to marry her). But as she said nothing about matters being settled, it could be taken for granted that Montagu was still being kept in suspense.

Of the lady herself, Mme. de la Fayette had little to say that was favourable: "She seemed to me a woman once handsome enough, but with no claim now to any trace of beauty, her whole manner and appearance being destitute of signs of youth. Add that she dresses badly and altogether without taste, and you will understand why I was not captivated by her. She seemed to grasp everything that was said to her, or rather what I said to her [at the return visit], for M. de Rochefoucauld and Mme. de Thianges, both of whom were very desirous of meeting her, did not arrive till she was going." Allowing for exaggerations, Mme. de la Fayette's unflattering opinion of Lady Northumberland was in the main accurate. The two years' ordeal had evidently aged her, and temporarily at least marred her good looks.

The date of Mme. de la Fayette's letter, April 15th, 1673, was, significantly enough, the date of Montagu's fruitless appeal to Arlington, himself about to be created an earl, to expedite the promised earldom to his father, Lord Montagu. If he could point to this undoubted mark of the king's favour, Montagu felt it would materially help his suit with the widow, which for want of some encouraging factor was languishing. Also it would enable him to appear before her as the potential equal in rank of her late husband. She could not forget that, besides having married an earl, she was herself the daughter of an earl, and a famous one into the bargain. In the absence of imposing possessions, marriage to Montagu might easily be represented as a retrograde step on her part, especially as several of the Percy relatives were openly hinting that she had been foolish not to marry the Duke of York.[1]

At this delicate stage, with the lady's family up in arms against the

[1] *Williamson Letters.*

suggestion that she should throw herself away on such a fellow as Montagu, whose character they held was none too savoury, it behoved the patient suitor not to worsen his position by false moves. Accordingly he had cut clean away from his old bachelor associations, avoiding in particular that pretty but rather empty-headed rattle, the Duchesse de Brissac [Gabrielle Louise Saint-Simon], sister of the famous diarist, to whose passion for being admired he had generously contributed, without, as was the case with her other lovers, deriving much tangible return. Of him, as of Armand, Comte de Guiche [eldest son of the Mareschal de Grammont], once notorious for his unguarded flirtation with *Madame*, it was true to say, as Mme. de Sévigné was at pains to stress, there was no indelicacy in his relations with the affected coquette. But Lady Northumberland was not to know that the intimacy was an innocent one, and so Montagu thought it best to cut entirely adrift, though the woebegone expression assumed by the Duchesse, when informed of his intentions, made leave-taking anything but pleasant.

The letters of Mme. de la Fayette form not only a clue to what was happening between Montagu and the Countess, but are a guide to what Paris *thought* was happening. Thus on May 19th, 1673, Montagu was reported to be leaving Paris, his hopes shattered, and Lady Northumberland, or " the nymph ", to repeat the Frenchwoman's sarcastic label, proclaimed not quite right in her head. But on May 27th, Mme. de la Fayette saw no reason to doubt that they would soon be married.

Actually the position was static. Much hard pleading on the man's part would be necessary before the lady sufficiently softened her heart to smile on his addresses. He had, however, by means of a clever flanking movement, taken one or two of the outer trenches of her defensive system. He had reassured her on the score of her daughter; with his help she would be able to force the mother-in-law to agree to a not unfavourable compromise. Some weeks later the long, patient, skilfully-conducted siege ended with the cunning suitor being allowed to march in, the final objections overcome by the belief that the man would be more than a match for the obnoxious lady in London.

All the Montagues were delighted. He had won not only a rich and charming bride, who had been thought good enough for the king's brother, but through the marriage would establish close links with some of the greatest families in the kingdom. Especially pleased was his go-ahead uncle, William Montagu, with whom, no doubt, he had often exchanged views as to the limits of the old lady's power under Earl Joceline's will, and still greater was that eminent lawyer's satisfaction on hearing of the material advantages which the union would confer on his nephew. Romance was all very well, but romance with a golden lining was infinitely preferable. " I am very glad to see my Lady Northumberland deals so nobly and affectionately with my nephew in settlement of her estate," was the way Uncle William phrased his pleasure.[1]

What these terms were we learn from a letter written by James Vernon, the diplomat, to Sir Joseph Williamson, who had succeeded Lord Arlington as Secretary of State. " In case of no children she hath settled her estate

[1] William Montagu to Lord Montagu of Boughton, Buccleuch MSS., Vol. I.

upon Mr. Montagu during his life in preference to all others."[1] Lord Montagu, on his part, reciprocated by settling his estate upon his fortunate son and heir, and starting him off with £2,000 per annum. This, added to the revenue he drew as Master of the Great Wardrobe, meant that Ralph Montagu could count on starting married life with £5,000 a year at least of his own. As the lady's income was £6,000 a year, the betrothed pair had the right to regard themselves as one of the six richest couples in the land.

The news that Montagu had captured such a rich prize was as much a nine days' wonder as his Ambassadorship had been. Gossip credited him with expecting all sorts of honours from the king, so pleased was His Majesty said to be with the match. He was, among other special favours, to have the title of the Countess's grandfather, the Earl of Chichester, revived in his favour.[2] Rumour flattered him. There was no truth in any of the reports. Charles, if he thought at all of creating either father or son an Earl, was reserving the honour as a bargaining point. With him everything had a price.

Meanwhile arrangements for the marriage, which was intended to be a quiet affair, were expedited. The Countess returned to England early in August, and on the 24th [1673], became Montagu's wife, the wedding taking place from the Wriothesley ancestral home at Titchfield, Hampshire, now the residence of the bride's half-sister, Lady Elizabeth Noel.[3] Temporarily Lady Northumberland's daughter was placed in charge of Dr. Mapletoft, who shared with John Locke the distinction of being the family's medical adviser.

When the Restoration courtiers and politicians were not intriguing, they were busily gossiping, and as what they heard and what they invented were inextricably mixed, it was often difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction. Even that sobersides of a diplomat, Sir Robert Southwell, could not refrain from joining in the sport of discussing the newly married couple. On August 31st [1673] he told Williamson that since Mr. Montagu had become possessed of his "bright purchase" the old lady had sent for the child, but had been repulsed, and that this defiant attitude was to be maintained. At the time the Town had already found a husband for the child and made the mother a Duchess.[4]

Sir Robert Southwell's sneer about Montagu's "bright purchase" seems to have been associated with the slanderous report that the bridegroom had bought his wife from her maid for £500 per annum.[5] By the beginning of October ill-natured people were saying that a separation was imminent. A month later Thomas Derham, one of Williamson's correspondents, improved on this with the statement, "Mr. Montagu and his lady begin already to live like man and wife, neither caring a rush for the other, which makes her marrying of him more and more to be wondered at, and that for him she should refuse not only Mr. [Hy] Saville [younger brother of the Marquis of Halifax *The Trimmer*], but Mr. Grey [Thomas Grey, 2nd Earl

[1, 2] *Williamson Letters.*

[3] Married to Edward Noel, son of Viscount Campden, afterwards created Earl of Gainsborough.

[4, 5] *Williamson Letters.* It is implied the maid was bribed to prosper Montagu's suit.

of Stamford, who actually married Montagu's niece, Lady Harvey's daughter] too."[1] Derham's letter concluded with scurrilous references to the supposed physical abnormalities of Grey's uncle and Montagu's sister.

Even more explicit information about the Montagu *ménage* seems to have reached Sir Gilbert Talbot, M.P., Master of the Jewel Office: "Your friend Ralph Montagu," he informed Williamson, "has managed this matter so that he and his Countess live in two beds, the reason said to be strong jealousy of the old mistress[2] [Mrs. Middleton, one of the Court beauties]."

Most likely there were differences between the Countess and her strong-willed spouse, but they did not amount to much, and in any case entirely disappeared with the birth of a son and heir the following year. Thereafter Lady Northumberland, who was of an affectionate type, simply doted on her husband, kissing him, according to Dorothy, Countess of Sunderland, a thousand times a day and calling him her pretty dear, which is less surprising when one remembers that Lady Rachel Russell, her half-sister, was in the habit of addressing her own husband even more effusively, "my dearest life and ever the earthly delight of my soul" being a typical specimen of her tender style. If Montagu, a hard-boiled realist, found this show of affection a little trying, he had the consolation of knowing that some drawback to a wife with £6,000 a year was to be expected.

. . . . . .

On the whole he felt he had done well for himself, and to occupy his mind began planning a great town house worthy of the high rank which he believed would one day be his. He liked the situation of Southampton House, Bloomsbury [later known as Bedford House], part of the inheritance of Rachel, Lady Russell, and on June 19th, 1675, purchased for the sum of £2,610 and a fee farm rent of £5 a seven acres nearby plot,[3] on which, from the designs of Robert Hooke suitably amended by himself, he proposed to build his mansion, which should be in keeping with the stately Russell residence.

But before the structure was put in hand, much that was unpleasant happened to Montagu. Towards the end of 1673 he had a fierce row with the ill-tempered Duke of Buckingham, culmination of a series of grievances which that reckless courtier had stored up against his one-time *protégé*. The Duke had conveniently forgotten the services Montagu had rendered him when he was in Paris discussing trade and other matters with Louis XIV. All he remembered, or wished to remember, was that through Montagu he had lost the honour and glory of being commander of 6,000 British troops to be raised at Charles's expense and employed against the Dutch, as stipulated in the secret Treaty of Dover. On that occasion, Buckingham, according to a letter from Colbert de Croissy, the French Ambassador to Louis, dated November 9th, 1671, had openly complained to Charles of Montagu, and less directly of Arlington, insinuating that they hated him for his initiative in promoting the Anglo-French *entente*. The king listened

[1], [2] *Williamson Letters*.
[3] *The Russells in Bloomsbury*, by Gladys Scott Thomson.

quietly and then remarked: "Even supposing Mr. Montagu had acted from no other motive than aversion to you, yet I cannot avoid approving his conduct because of the good that has resulted," adding to this sobering speech the freezing remark, "When great interests are at stake, I consider you no more than my dog." [1]

That episode was not calculated to lessen Buckingham's dislike for Montagu, and those aware of his feelings suspected it was only a question of time before there was a flare-up. At Whitehall one day, the Duke, hurrying to reach the king, noticed Montagu standing in the circle in the withdrawing room, and roughly hustled him out of his path. On being told that his aggressor was Buckingham, wishful of passing, Montagu refused to budge. In the altercation that followed, he challenged the Duke to an immediate duel, but the latter preferred to wait until the morrow. The king intervened by committing Montagu to the Tower for creating a disturbance at his palace, but Buckingham he allowed to go scot-free.[2]

Outraged at the palpable unfairness of the proceeding, Montagu promptly appealed to Arlington, who equally disliked Buckingham, saying that he was quite willing to obey the king's command, but protested that the wording of the order for his imprisonment bore no relation to the facts. When he called out to Buckingham "follow me", he was endeavouring to avoid a disturbance in the king's presence, not challenging the Duke.[3] His protest bore no fruit. However, on the representations of his friends, he was released after being three days in the Tower, though as a sop to Buckingham's feelings he was confined to his house until Charles had decided what satisfaction was due to the Duke.

The Montagues of Boughton, hereabouts, seem to have been unlucky in their relations with Charles's favourites. The following year the highly decorous Lord Montagu had the misfortune to fall foul of the Duke of Monmouth, destined to number Ralph Montagu among his most ardent supporters. On leaving a lady's house, he was stopped and taken into custody by the guard on the instructions of Monmouth, whose language on being rebuked was more picturesque than penitent. Not a man to stomach an unmerited insult, he insisted on the king taking his spoilt son to task, with the result that Monmouth was confined to his chamber.[4]

Arlington's failure to help him in the Buckingham fracas could only be interpreted by Montagu as further proof of that statesman's decline from power, if not from favour. True he was an Earl and Knight of the Garter, but twice he had been passed over for the Lord Treasurership, the most important official post in the gift of the king, and in the hands of an unscrupulous man remunerative enough to be a quick and sure way to fortune. First his own *protégé*, Lord Clifford, had been promoted; then, on his resignation, Sir Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby, who had risen through Buckingham, had been proclaimed his successor. Nor was that the full extent of Arlington's humiliation. Assailed in Parliament as a promoter of Popery and an embezzler, he had, notwithstanding that the impeachment had been dropped, thought it prudent to sell his Secretaryship

[1, 2] *Dalrymple Memoirs.* [3] Buccleuch MSS., Vol. I.
[4] *Essex Papers*, Vol. I.

to Williamson, who had his industry, but not his brains, and content himself with the ornamental post of Lord Chamberlain, which was equivalent to stepping down from stardom, at the very centre of things, and becoming a glorified flunkey. He had staked his future on a last throw which had failed—the marriage of Princess Mary, daughter of the Duke of York, to William, Prince of Orange. Had it been his luck and not Danby's to have brought off the marriage, he might have hoped by this testimony of an anti-Catholic policy to regain some part of his lost popularity.

Montagu was frankly surprised by the extent of Arlington's recession in power, and was left with the uncomfortable feeling of having backed the wrong horse. He had allowed himself to be deceived by such illusory signs of Charles's favour as the Earldom and the Garter, whereas he would have done better to remember his own warning to Arlington on October 19th, 1669. He had quoted M. de St. Agrian, a Frenchman lately returned from London, as saying that it was a custom in England, when the king was angry with anybody, to have them taken off, and that the latest to be ridiculed was the Secretary of State, the performers being Buckingham and Bab May [Keeper of the Privy Purse]. "The story is not very welcome from me to you," added Montagu apologetically, "but in a story one must leave out nothing. . . . The king was entertained with your comedy. Whoever did it, it could not make you more ridiculous in England than the king appears ridiculous here [Paris]. . . . Secretaries of State are otherwise used in this country, though there be as good railleurs and mimics as in other places. Pray God in heaven keep you from the Court's falling on you in jest and the Parliament in earnest, when the king does not take your part."[1]

With Arlington a decided back-number, Montagu had to ask himself what was his best course. Should he drop the old favourite and take up with the new? For so undeniable an opportunist there would seem to be only one answer. But the question was not as simple as it looked. He liked Arlington and he trusted him; he was suspicious of Danby and repelled by his cold manner. However, the fact could not be gainsaid that Danby was on the crest of the wave, and that if he wished to take up another official position he must needs conciliate him. In the end he did what was wisest in the circumstances: he determined to be friendly with both, though not denying himself the luxury of quarrelling with Arlington's young married daughter, the Duchess of Grafton.

So as not to be too conspicuously identified with the Lord Chamberlain, he left it to his efficient sister, Lady Harvey, to exploit such influence as the statesman still commanded. His letters to Arlington were mostly couched in lighter vein, an outlet for his keen sense of humour which was entirely wasted on Danby, who took life very seriously and was generally most businesslike. For the amusement of the Lord Chamberlain he burles-

[1] Buccleuch MSS., Vol. I. As performed by Buckingham, Bab May, and other ribald courtiers for the entertainment of Charles, the mimicry of Lord Arlington was as diverting as it was unmannerly and cruel. Armed with tongs and shovels to suggest the insignia of office, and with their noses plastered in imitation of Arlington's scar covering, they marched into the royal presence, exaggerating the Secretary's pompous carriage.

qued the frailties of William Perwich, a useful but hopelessly unambitious Embassy underling, whom Montagu kept on out of kindness to the former Secretary of State. "Mr. Perwich," he told him, "is at a stand, though he can seldom stand, for he is most eternally drunk. Therefore, pray my Lord, tell me whether you are in jest or earnest concerned for him; if in earnest I will do him all the service I can, though he can do me none."

. . . . . .

Though unblushing flattery liberally dispensed still remained an essential feature of Montagu's strategy with his superiors, he judged something more forcible requisited to ensure Danby's goodwill. Luckily he was aided by the king's renewed interest in him. As husband of the rich Lady Northumberland and stepfather to the heiress of the vast Percy estates, he was a person whom Charles, with his brood of illegitimate children to provide for, could not afford to neglect.

The king was too clever to open out directly to Montagu whom he had often snubbed. He began his approaches by conferring a small favour on Lord Montagu, granting his request for the disafforestation of Geddington Woods, adjoining his estates, thereby adding to their amenities. To show his gratitude the aged peer agreed to match all his horses against the king's at Newmarket, an offer which Charles, devoted to racing, gladly accepted. Then the king appointed William Montagu, Ralph's uncle, Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer, and finally in the autumn of 1676 he sent Montagu back to Paris as Ambassador, which explains his jocular letter respecting Perwich. Thus relations of the most cordial kind were re-established between Charles and Ralph Montagu, and the ground set for bringing into operation the king's design respecting Lady Betty Percy, the real explanation of the favours conferred on the Montagues.

Had not Charles visualised in Montagu's red-haired stepdaughter an admirable match for one of his illegitimate sons, it is certain he would never have reappointed Montagu Ambassador in Paris. In the absence of this weighty factor, neither his previous experience nor his ability to stand the expense of so costly a diplomatic station, would have influenced the king. We repeat, he had no liking for Montagu, whom some inexplicable instinct bade him mistrust.

On the other hand, the Ambassador was not deceived as to the king's motives. What had been done was not on account of his blue eyes, as the saying is, but because of Lady Betty and her immense possessions. To save the king embarrassment he made the appropriate moves. No sooner was he settled in Paris than he invited Danby to suggest a match between the heiress and the Earl of Plymouth, Charles's illegitimate son by Catharine Pegge. The Duchess of Cleveland, otherwise Lady Castlemaine, however, badgered the king into proposing her third and youngest son by him, George Fitzroy, Earl of Northumberland, as the consort for the golden bride, a suggestion which both Lady Northumberland and her proud mother-in-law viewed with considerable distaste. To ingratiate herself with the reluctant Countess, about whom she had not previously troubled her head, the Duchess paid several visits to the Montagu abode, on each occasion exerting herself

to be particularly sweet, a point stressed by Danby when answering on the king's behalf:

> "The king would rather that match could be had for Lord Northumberland . . . The Duchess of Cleveland and your lady are upon so good terms with one another that he believes the notion might perhaps now be agreeable to your lady, though it hath not been so formerly . . . If yet the same difficulties remain . . . His Majesty will look upon it as a good service if your Excellency can procure it for Lord Plymouth."[1]

Danby's letter was dated January 8th, 1667, but not until March was it answered by Montagu. Pleading his wife's illness for the delay, he explained that Lady Northumberland felt it advisable that her daughter, who was but ten, should wait until she was of an age to choose for herself. For that reason she deplored the pressure being put on Lady Betty by the grandmother to marry Lord Ogle, the eldest son of the Duke of Newcastle. However, the grandmother could do nothing for two years; then, as the mother was adverse to the match, and the daughter disposed to follow her wishes rather than those of the old lady, the issue was bound to come before the king and Council for adjudication. That would be the time for serving His Majesty.

To cloak the discouraging nature of his reply, Montagu dilated with some humour on the antics to which the rivalry between the eleven-year-old Lord Northumberland and Lord Ogle was giving rise. When in the rôle of suitors for the hand of the little girl with all the money, the two spoilt boys met, they made faces at each other, and Lord Northumberland's governor had thought it prudent to interdict further meetings.[2]

Montagu's explanation, which may justly be likened to a rebuff, was the reverse of pleasant to Charles, who did not like to see himself frustrated, but he recovered his good-humour on being assured by the Ambassador that he could wheedle out of Louis much larger sums than the king had deemed possible. While intent on doing his best for his royal master, he did not propose to neglect his own interests, a fact which he carefully concealed both from Charles and his Lord Treasurer. The astonishing thing is that two such clever men should choose to believe that a self-seeking, ambitious, utterly unprincipled careerist of Montagu's intellectual calibre, would wilfully engage in such indelicate and dangerous work as selling England's neutrality, for no other recompense than their formal thanks. It was too much to expect of one tainted with the familiar vices of the typical Restoration politician, and Charles of all men should not have been guilty of so flagrant a miscalculation. Even less pardonable was Danby's obtuseness. Never did it seem to occur to this ultra-cunning statesman, who if he did not invent, certainly developed, Parliamentary corruption to the point of a fine art, that by actively associating himself with the sordid money negotiations—lending his name to explicit demands for Louis's

[1] Both letters are given in full in Vol. III [the only one to be published as yet] of Professor Andrew Browning's study of the Earl of Danby. In the extracts here made the spelling, and in one instance the grammar, of the original has been modernised, while Montagu's reply has been abbreviated and paraphrased.

[2] See preceding note.

ELIZABETH, COUNTESS OF NORTHUMBERLAND
(After the portrait by Sir Peter Lely)

THOMAS OSBORNE, 1ST DUKE OF LEEDS
(After the portrait by Vander Vaart)

HENRY BENNET, EARL OF ARLINGTON
(After the portrait by Sir Peter Lely)

gold—he was delivering himself into the hands of Montagu, who, if ever he felt unfairly treated, had at his disposal a ready-made means of revenge.

That Montagu should deliberately seek to entrap the Lord Treasurer into incriminating himself may seem too tall a story to command ready credence, but when the letters which make up this infamous chapter in Restoration history are carefully studied, no other conclusion is possible. The fantastic plot shows up in all its wealth of detail. From the astonishing correspondence the Ambassador emerges a cool, calculating, diabolically clever schemer with a most persistent and insinuating form of address, while the Lord Treasurer presents the picture of a well-meaning servant of the king, who while fully conscious where the true interests of England lie, is yet too bent on power to challenge Charles's fatal predilection for France.

No special insight on Montagu's part was wanted to grasp the essentials of the situation to which he was required to apply his wits. Charles urgently wanted money both for national as well as personal needs. "How," cried the chagrined king, "can I depend upon my Parliament to furnish me with regular and adequate supplies to carry on a war which they will not so much enable me to provide for?" The answer was simple. Had Parliament trusted him to make proper use of such money as they voted him, he would have been in no such fix. They feared, however, that any army raised ostensibly to fight France, would be used not to protect but to attack English liberties. For all that, Parliament did vote substantial amounts for new ships and for raising new regiments, though the promised war with Charles's paymaster, Louis XIV., remained nothing but talk. If anything can be said in extenuation of the king's duplicity, it is that he had always to apprehend a sudden accession of panic on the part of his Parliament, followed by an equally sudden clamping down of supplies. Distrust, born in the first instance of Charles's Catholicizing policy for England, poisoned the relations between the king and the representatives of the nation, and there was no seeming cure in sight.[1]

As for the Lord Treasurer, in common with Sir William Temple whose many virtues did not extend to political courage, he had striven his hardest to convert Charles to an anti-French policy, and though results had so far been disappointing, he had not yet entirely given up hope of saving the situation. If he could not swing the king round to his point of view, at least he might counteract some of the mischievous effects of Charles's Francophile policy. As Hallam rightly points out, bad as was our foreign policy, it would have been infinitely worse had Danby abetted the king or the Duke of York in their Francophilism. Unfortunately, as his influence over the king progressively declined, more and more he was driven into courses which his judgment and patriotic instincts roundly condemned.

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The war between Danby's sound but yielding conscience and his lust for continued power was not lost on Montagu, as, alert and sensitive to the

[1] "Catholicity by ceasing to be a secret, finally divorced him (Charles) from his people, and enveloped even his spasms of independence and national pride in a vicious circle of suspicion, which made both king and Parliament the victims of Louis XIV., paralysed their policy by the Popish plot, and for ten years set France on a peak of insolent aggression."—*British Foreign Policy*, 1660–1672, by Dr. Keith Feiling.

political and psychological forces at work, he applied himself to his task, which, as he told himself, was to stand well with both king and Minister, while being careful not to appear other than a passive instrument of their will. A delicate balancing act was called for, but he had no doubts as to being equal to the ordeal.

With such skill did he perform his duties, that never once was a suspicion of his honesty and sincerity to cross the minds of the shrewd pair from whom his instructions emanated. He drilled into the king's receptive mind the comforting idea that in the matter of subsidies the French were profiteering at his expense. "I am sure," wrote Montagu on June 21st, 1677, "the greatness of the king of France is supported by Your Majesty's connivance at what he does . . . The advantages he has by it, even in point of revenue, by his conquests do amount to five times the sum you have now from him . . . I am confident I could get a million livres[1] a year to be paid while the war [with Holland and Spain] still lasts, and four millions six months after the peace . . . over and above [what] you have from them."

Montagu supported his argument by a number of indiscreet revelations made to him by Ruvigny [uncle of the half-French Lady Russell], formerly French Ambassador in London. On the plea that the existence of his letter endangered his informant's safety, he asked that his sister, Lady Harvey, might see this particular letter burnt. Frequently he was to make the same request, but never once does it appear to have been heeded.

Having put the king in the right mood for the further squeezing of Louis, "that mock hero of sham greatness", to repeat Lord Acton's apt phrase, he turned his attention to Danby, whom by appearing to be entirely devoted to his interest he proposed to make more responsive to his suggestions. Fifty years later the same stratagem, applied on a wholesale scale, enabled Sir Robert Walpole, a much cleverer man, to subdue Parliament to his will. By subtle appeals to Danby's unsleeping vanity, and to that sense of indispensability which the king's *temporary* dependence on him encouraged, Montagu gradually wore down his objection to being more closely identified with the humiliating money demands on France, as to which his rôle, hitherto, had been one of mild acquiescence, rather than that of enthusiastic endorsement.

But artful and appealing as were the Ambassador's fulsome letters, it is questionable whether they would have succeeded in their aim had not Charles, his greed inflamed by Montagu's glib talk of the gold to be extracted from Louis, commanded his Lord Treasurer to squeeze France to the last livre. His better instincts mutely rebelling against his instructions, Danby must have wished Montagu and his sugary compilations at the other end of the earth. Imagine his feelings on reading the letter in which the Ambassador urged that it rested with him, the wise and faithful servant and much the more experienced bargainer, to save the king, all innocent in such matters, from being tricked out of his rightful dues by the crafty French Ambassador, bent on keeping payment down to the minimum! Picture, too, his expression when presented with Montagu's felicitations on his

[1] 30 livres = £1 sterling.

escape from the degradation of having personally to handle the money:

"August 12th, 1677: I congratulate very heartily your lordship that Mr. Chiffinch [superintendent with others of the king's *amours*] is to be the French Treasurer. That office can never do you any good, and may do you hurt. You may be confident of my secrecy about this whole affair both for the king's, your lordship's and my own sake, for it would be no popular nor creditable thing if it were known."[1]

In no plainer or more unequivocal language could Montagu have expressed his real opinion of the dishonourable commerce. That he was merely echoing Danby's own sentiments he was fully aware, otherwise he would not have risked being so dangerously frank. What, then, becomes of the argument advanced by some modern historians that, forced by a distrustful Parliament into an impossible financial position, Charles did the best he could for himself and the country?

Had Danby valued his reputation as much as his Lord Treasurership, he would have taken warning from Montagu's letter with its sinister undertone. But the feeling that his position was none too secure not only sapped his resistance to Charles's demands, but blinded him to the true inwardness of the letters from Montagu that followed. For with malignant intent that cunning schemer acknowledged Danby's carefully phrased letters as *instructions*, though often they were no more than endorsements of his own suggestions.

On September 25th, 1677, taking the view that the Lord Treasurer was committed up to the hilt, Montagu blandly counselled him to hold out for the highest subsidy yet demanded from the French, £200,000, reminding him that when he [Danby] undertook the government without any Parliament to vote supplies [Parliament had been prorogued from November, 1675 to February, 1677, to allow Charles to earn his French subsidy], it was in the belief that such monetary aid could be counted upon . . . "I would have you do that which none of the king's Ministers have yet had the address to do," went on Montagu, seemingly moved by patriotic fervour, "which is to take an ascendant over France, which is next to what you have a mind to do, that is to cudgel into a better behaviour and more respect towards our Master. And this is the time of doing it, for by this we shall judge of our strength, which as yet we are ignorant of."[2]

[1] Charles, in accordance with a treaty made in 1676, was receiving in quarterly instalments from France £100,000 a year for proroguing or dissolving Parliament whenever it tried to force on him treaties inacceptable to France. In the French Foreign Office records there are signed and sealed receipts from the king, dated September 25th, October 1st, and December 1st, 1676, respectively. The first, written in a "firm and flowery hand in which there is no trace of the nervous agitation which shame might cause," runs thus: "I have received from His Most Christian Majesty, by the hands of M. Courtin, the sum of a hundred thousand crowns, French money, for the second quarter, ending the last day of the year, and to be deducted from the four hundred thousand crowns payable at the end of this year. Given at Whitehall, Sept. 25, 1676, Charles R."—*Aff. Etr. Angleterre*, tome cxxi, fol. 213, 216, 307—*Louise de Kérouaille*, by H. Forneron.

When Colbert de Croissy, the French Ambassador, was at his own request recalled in January, 1674, Charles gave him a receipt for all the French money he had received since December, 1670—£600,000.—*Charles II.*, by David Ogg.

[2] *Morrison Catalogue*, IV: 277.

Here, if ever, was a case of Jonah preaching to the converted. To be firm with the French had been Danby's policy for the last two or three years, but what could be done with a king who preferred dependence on France, or *ease with dishonour*, to being at the mercy of a rightly suspicious, hence exacting, Parliament; a king, above all, who refused to listen to unpalatable advice proclaiming it wisdom to consult the wishes of the House of Commons regarding foreign alliances?

Whether the king swallowed all Montagu's soothing syrup is doubtful. Still it was pleasant to be told that he was behaving towards Louis with quixotic generosity; sacrificing himself to oblige a fellow-monarch. His manner encouraged the Ambassador to introduce a bold, familiar note into the correspondence. *Apropos* the prospective marriage of the Prince of Orange to Princess Mary [fixed for November 4th, 1677] he insisted that without adequate compensation His Majesty could not set up his family in its legitimate splendour, and must continue to retrench [a most remarkable statement in view of the king's extravagant gifts to members of his harem]. He had not been mealy-mouthed with the French Ministers, and had left them in no doubt as to His Majesty's awareness of the increased power and revenue they derived from their Continental conquests; hence how unreasonable it was that he [Charles], so far from receiving any share of the booty, should be a loser by the war.[1]

Louis could stomach any amount of protests from Charles, but decisive action of a threatening character, such as the pending marriage of Charles's niece to his greatest enemy, roused his choler. For a quarter of an hour he compelled Montagu, summoned hastily to Versailles, to listen to a tirade against his master's duplicity, disregarding the Ambassador's protest that he knew nothing of the matter. Answering Danby, who asked him how the French monarch took the news of the coming marriage, he replied, "As he would have done the loss of an army!"[2]

Naturally enough, Louis blamed Charles for promising one thing and doing another. Thereby he did the king a grave injustice. Charles had not the slightest wish to be alienated from his brother monarch, but circumstances had got a little beyond him. He had felt it prudent to defer to Parliament, determined that France should yield up some of her Flanders conquests. How distasteful the new turn of events was to him might be gathered from Danby's letter of January 9th, 1678, to Montagu. His Majesty was very unwilling to break with France, yet scarce could see how it could be avoided. Helping to aggravate the king's ill-humour was the stoppage for three weeks of the sums due under the old agreement. Instead of £50,000 payable in December, only £18,000 had been received, though £30,000 had been in London for over a month. Unless some balm from heaven were applied to the wound, it must bleed very suddenly.[3]

There was only one kind of balm that Charles understood, or had any use for, the balm that was safely locked away in France's gold chest. Consequently, the next step was fairly predictable. While outwardly maintaining his warlike disposition, the king secretly manœuvred for another

[1] October 12th, 1677. *Morrison Catalogue.* [2] Burnet.
[3] Hodgkin Hist. MSS., Comm. Report.

paid understanding with France. The move, if thoroughly dishonourable, did not lack shrewdness, inasmuch as it was an attempt to profit from the knowledge that Holland and Spain were as tired of the ruinous struggle as they were weary of relying on so uncertain an ally as England. Most probably he doubted being adequately supported by Parliament, which had never ceased to suspect him of designs against English liberties,[1] and, perhaps, was no less distrustful of the effectiveness of any aid from Holland, distracted as was that country by internal dissension. But what must have proved the decisive factor was the attitude of the Opposition, whose obstructive tactics were being continually stimulated by French gold and specious talk.[2] Louis, in pursuance of the old French plan of playing off the king and Parliament against each other, deceived both separately, while pretending to be a friend to both separately.[3] Just as artful as the French monarch, Charles was fully cognisant of what was going on, and for the time being felt his safest and most profitable course was to draw a dividend from the coming peace by offering himself as mediator. That he broke faith with Parliament was a secondary consideration with him. He had been doing that ever since the secret Treaty of Dover, and no harm had befallen him.

Accordingly, four days after the approval of the Poll Bill under which he received £600,000 for the war with France, i.e., on March 25th, he went in hot pursuit of the balm from heaven. On his instructions Danby applied to Louis for a pension of six million livres a year for three years, Charles to use his best endeavours with Holland and Spain to bring about peace.[4] The commission was little to the Lord Treasurer's liking. He realised both its infamy and its danger, and not until the king had endorsed the draft with the words, "I aprove of this letter", did he agree to send it off.

The salient passages were: "In case the conditions of peace [proposals earlier outlined in the letter by Charles] shall be accepted, the king expects to have six millions of livres a year for three years . . . because it will be two or three years before the Parliament will be in humour to give him any supplies after the making of any peace with France. . . . If you find the peace will not be accepted, you are not to mention the money at all. And all possible care must be taken to have this whole negotiation as private as possible, for fear of giving offence at home."[5]

. . . . . .

The production in Parliament, six months later, of this dangerously-

[1] Courtin, the French Ambassador, had assured Charles that the King of France was always ready to employ all his forces for the consolidation and augmentation of the royal authority in England.

[2] In January, 1678, Ruvigny's son was sent over to England for the express purpose of negotiating with the leaders of the Opposition. He was acting on his royal master's plan of keeping Charles and his Parliament in constant opposition, so as to reduce this country to the point of impotence. It was the old game played to such advantage by Richelieu and Mazarin.

[3] The frankest exposure of Louis's strategy is to be found in a dispatch of Barrillon, dated December 5th, 1680: "With regard to the future, I see what your Majesty has most at heart is to prevent England from being reunited by an accommodation between His Britannic Majesty and his Parliament."

[4], [5] Hodgkin MSS.

phrased letter was to result in Danby spending five years in the Tower. In his old age, looking back on his career, he felt ashamed of having stooped so low, and in 1710, or after a lapse of thirty years, when Montagu his betrayer was dead and consequently unable to challenge its accuracy, he produced a doctored version of the infamous letter, designed to make posterity believe that the responsibility was the king's and not his. To that end he had altered Charles's endorsement, "I aprove of this letter, C. R." to "This letter was writ by my order, C. R." There is, of course, a world of difference between approving of a thing *after it has been done*, and ordering it to be done; but in draping himself for posterity, Danby felt some manipulation of his materials excusable, if it permitted him to assume a more decorous aspect.

In the light of subsequent events it was sheer folly on his part to entrust Montagu, of whose real nature and motives he knew very little, with so dangerous a letter given under his own signature; yet in fairness to the Lord Treasurer it must be pointed out that, in the spring of 1678, thanks to Montagu's consummate artistry in handling him, everything in the garden seemed lovely. Even Lord Dunblane, the Minister's son, who was over in Paris for a holiday, acted as advocate for the Ambassador, refusing to return home, so delighted was he with the warmth and geniality of Montagu's hospitality. And this further may be said: had the Lord Treasurer, forgoing his fear of raising up a possible rival, behaved with reasonable generosity towards his accomplice in the balm-extracting operation, he would have had nothing to fear. Ingratitude was not one of Montagu's vices, and if he could return a kindness he did so, as witness his gift that year [1678] of a rare muff of dainty squirrel-skins to poor, despised Catherine of Braganza,[1] a gesture in her case safer than hand-squeezing.

If Montagu, knowing how short were the memories of Charles's Ministers, thought it wise to retain some hold on Danby, he intended him no harm save by way of revenge and reprisal for some unjustified wrong. He believed that the necessity of their hanging together would be sufficiently evident to the Lord Treasurer to make him kind to his [Montagu's] ambitions, and he looked forward with confidence to his faith in the Minister's goodwill towards him being fully vindicated.

How little he cherished misgivings of Danby's attitude was shown by his equable manner and by the heartiness with which he entered into the social life of Paris. In the arduous duties of hostess, Lady Northumberland, being often incapacitated by bouts of acute neuralgia, had the assistance of Montagu's capable sister, Lady Harvey. Despairing of the French medical men, she whom he revered as "the best lady in France" had fallen back on the ministrations of that old friend, John Locke, who, helped by the advice of Mapletoft and Thomas Sydenham, possibly the most brilliant of English physicians, relieved her shrieking pain. Thereafter Locke, whose cleverness had been shown in the skilful operation for internal abscess he had performed on Lord Ashley [later Earl of Shaftesbury], laboured to improve the Countess's general health, thus safeguarding her from future

[1] *Rutland Papers.*

attacks. As some sort of recompense Montagu saw that Locke had every opportunity of studying the gaieties of French Court life.[1]

It was impossible to know Lady Northumberland without learning to love and admire her. Lady Masham, the good friend of Locke, did not exaggerate when she spoke of her as a lady not less distinguished by her virtue, parts and every excellence of mind, than by her rank, riches or beauty, a combination of gifts of fortune and nature hardly to be found elsewhere. Paris was chiefly interested in her wealth and looks. When the Countess chose to make a courtesy call on the queen, there was a large crowd to see her arrive, proof of the insatiable curiosity she provoked. With the improvement in her health came the return of that geniality of temper which was her distinguishing feature, though she would have felt happier if the report, which attributed to her approaching motherhood, had been true.

Of the bohemian element which, by the direct encouragement of Montagu and his sister, found its way into the Embassy entertainments, the most conspicuous were the lonely genius, La Fontaine, and Boileau, archpriest of classicalism, whose ignorance of the English literary scene was such that he inquired who Dryden was to deserve a public funeral.[2] The most awkward of the guests was the Duchess of Cleveland, who, much to the king's relief, indeed at his express wish, had made her home in Paris, and it fell to Montagu, officially and otherwise, to oblige her in various respects. Being dropped by her royal lover had not lowered her arrogance or pretensions, and she had gone to the length of refusing a passport from Louis because she was not treated as *ma cousine*, like her sister in sin, the Frenchborn Duchess of Portsmouth, otherwise Louise Kéroualle. Since the end of 1677 she had been joined by her flighty daughter by the king, Anne, Countess of Sussex, not yet eighteen, but already giving signs of being as lost to modesty as her mother.

Since this shameless young woman was to be the cause of Montagu's violent quarrel in the near future with the Duchess, and that in turn was to lead to his being disgraced by Charles, it is necessary to dwell at some length on her character and conduct. Neither, unfortunately, had been improved by her close intimacy with the Duchesse Mazarin, the king's latest "flame". It was the practice of this voluptuous beauty to vary visits to her young friend's apartments, which led by a private staircase to the royal quarters, with nocturnal tête-à-têtes with Charles, the insatiable lover. For some time the two women were inseparables whose vanity or folly made them exhibitionists. Attired in their nightgowns they amused a crowd of wide-eyed loungers in St. James's Park by a display of swordsmanship, their fine passes, no less than their saucy appearance, exciting much admiration. When they had nothing better to do on a Sunday, they repaired to the abode of Courtin, the French Ambassador, no enemy to the fair sex, and amused him by playing shuttlecock and battledore.

Lord Sussex frowned on the intimacy with Duchesse, and at his suggestion his wife for a time rusticated in Hurstmonceux; but tiring of the prevalent

[1] *Life of John Locke*, by H. R. Fox Bourne.
[2] *The Life and Works of Arthur Maynwaring*, by J. Oldmixon.

amusements in that peaceful spot—hunting, hawking, ninepins, cricket—fled to Paris, where Montagu, coupling the office of British Ambassador with that of unreformed *roué*, engaged her attention. What happened is a matter of dispute, but the general opinion in the capital was that while the mother, the Duchess of Cleveland, was away in London, they shared a passionate interlude. Even so, the affair, which seems to have given rise to considerable scandal, might never have assumed the serious proportions it did, had not Montagu incensed the already furious Duchess by unwarrantably poking his nose into her private affairs. She happened at the time to be smitten with the fascinating Chevalier de Châtillon [Alexis Henri, Marquis de Châtillon], who like his 1671–5 predecessor, John Churchill, future Duke of Marlborough, was young, handsome and impecunious. But, as the Paris wits said, the Duchess was *passée* and glad to take what offered. *When you cannot run, you must walk.*[1]

The Duchess claimed that Montagu was annoyed at not being allowed to compete with the much younger lover for her favours. He had been unceremoniously repulsed. That he, with his innumerable opportunities, should want to start an intrigue with the king's cast-off mistress, under the very eyes of his young wife and sister, is difficult to believe. Paris, which was always ready to assume the worst as true of its gallants, credited the story, but the probability is that what it took for interest in the mother was really interest in the daughter. According to the Duchess, Montagu objected to being snubbed ; according to him, she resented her relations with Châtillon being criticised—whatever the truth they came to angry words. The lady, whose life had been made up of quarrels and reconciliations, fancied that as usually happened with her admirers, Montagu would recover his ill-temper and all would be well again.

But she entirely misjudged him. A dangerous and terribly vindictive fellow to annoy, he attacked her viciously. Having by means of bribes managed to secure some of her passionate epistles to the young Frenchman, he forwarded them on to the king, shrewdly suspecting that Charles would be more put out on his daughter's account than on that of his ex-mistress, whom he had enjoined to behave discreetly.

Where Montagu went wrong was in supposing that the Duchess would not discover the identity of her betrayer. In January, 1678, they were still exchanging confidences. Reporting to Danby that she intended to cross to England with her family, he represented her as not a little vexed at the trouble Arlington, whose daughter was married to her son, had put her to by the journey, which meant separating her children from their exercises.[2] Even as late as May he was wholly unconscious of any mischief coming to him from that quarter, as we may gather from his letter to Henry Sidney [quoted in the *Sidney Diary*], full of the friendliest references to her presence in England.

Allowing for the fact that he knew Sidney and the Duchess to be on the most cordial terms, he would not have written in this strain had he felt at all uneasy about her : " I am glad to hear my Lady Cleveland looked

[1] *Hatton Correspondence.*
[2] *Danby Letters*, edited by Andrew Browning.

so well. I do not wonder at it. I will always lay on her side against everybody. I am a little scandalised you have been but once to see her. Pray make your court oftener for my sake, for no man can be more obliged to another than I am to her on all occasions, and tell her I say so, and, as my Lord Berkeley[1] says, 'give her a pat from me'. If you keep your word to come [to Paris] in June, I fancy you will cross together, and I shall not be ill-pleased to see the two people in the world of both sexes I love and esteem the most."

By the time Sidney received this letter, the Duchess, in all probability, was fully enlightened as to the harm done her by Montagu. The king's manner was particularly cold, and his main anxiety was that she should recross to Paris with all speed.[2] When, eventually, she did get back, it was to find injury piled upon injury: her daughter gone from the nunnery where she had been placed for safety, and apparently so much under Montagu's influence as to refuse to return. It is suggested with some show of truth that Lady Sussex's removal from her mother's care had been contrived with the king's approval; if so, it had been done so clumsily that, as the Duchess complained, the young woman's name had become a byword.[3]

. . . . . .

That, for all his shrewdness, Montagu was as liable to go off the rails as his brother had been, seems clear from his behaviour that first half of 1678. While striving his hardest to be appointed Secretary of State, thereby fulfilling a part of his ambition, he allowed himself to get embroiled with so notoriously spiteful a woman as the former Lady Castlemaine, a perfect vixen when aroused, as Charles knew only too well. What business had he, a newly-married man, to interfere with the king's discarded mistress and her choice of lovers? As for stepping in between mother and daughter, one almost as bad as the other, was that not simply asking for trouble? Ennui, as we know, was the fatal curse of the age, but occupied as he was with his Ambassadorial duties, Montagu should have escaped the common affliction of his set. The only feasible explanation is that, like his hand-squeezing brother, he suffered from a kink, which, temporarily at least, left him at the mercy of the most senseless whim.

What he did that year (1678) would, most likely, be decisive of his future. He had set his heart on succeeding Henry Coventry as Secretary of State, and, as was the custom, stood ready to pay the compensation stipulated—£10,000. What is more, he had already notified the Lord Treasurer of his intention, and with pardonable confidence awaited a favourable response. Meanwhile, he had written to his cousin, Charles Bertie, brother of Lady Danby, saying that as long as he retained her goodwill, and there was no question of Sir William Temple [Danby's first choice] being nominated, he did not despair of the appointment.[4] Lady Danby's itch for meddling in public affairs was notorious, and Montagu, no doubt, counted on his

[1] *The Berkeleys of Berkeley Square*, by Bernard Falk.
[2] *Hatton Correspondence.*
[3] The Duchess's letter to Charles. See later in Chapter.
[4] *Morrison Catalogue*, IV, 284–5.

letter stirring her up on his behalf, the more so as she must guess there was a present at the end of it. In a second letter to Bertie he remarked with significant emphasis, "I think all men make professions to get their ends, but my Lord Treasurer has a very good pawn for the security of my firmness to him, since, besides the tie of kindred and honour, I venture my own money, and anybody that did that and were at difference with him, would have laid out his money very ill."[1]

But Danby clung to his choice of Temple and in consequence was deaf to all Montagu's entreaties. He liked and trusted Temple, with whom in his young days he spent much time on the Continent, travelling and playing tennis. Lady Temple, better known by her maiden name of Dorothy Osborne, was a kinswoman, whom before her union with Sir William he had unsuccessfully sought in marriage. However, his main reason for wanting Temple was that they shared the same views as to the correct foreign policy for England—the alignment of the Protestant Powers against French aggression—and his knowing him to be quite disinterested.

It was not the first time Temple could have had the Secretaryship for the asking. In the spring of 1674 he might have succeeded Arlington, but preferred to let Williamson have the appointment. As an inducement to him to say "yes", Montagu offered to lend him the £6,000 required to pay out Arlington. This time the king, in his anxiety to secure Temple in place of Coventry, offered to find half the stipulated compensation, but that not very courageous statesman was not to be tempted. In the circumstances Montagu felt that Temple had been treated with every consideration, and that he was eminently justified in urging his own claim. As his application hung fire, he addressed himself again to Danby [June 4th, 1678], appealing not to his sense of fairness of which, as yet, he lacked tangible proof, but to a surer and weightier motive, his self-interest. In the office of Secretary, he argued, he could be more useful to him than in the inferior position of Paris Ambassador. The offer to Temple could not be left open indefinitely, and the king would endorse any choice made by his Lord Treasurer.

Danby was not impressed. His mind was fixed on Temple. Moreover, he saw no reason to depart from his hitherto successful policy of excluding from power all possible rivals—men with initiative, brains and daring—and Montagu with his restless ambition was too uncomfortably like Buckingham for an exception to be made in his case. At the first opportunity he [Danby] had shaken off dependence on the reckless courtier who had assisted him to rise, and he was giving Montagu no chance of behaving the same way to him.

The summer was half-spent without Montagu being any nearer his goal. To add to his worries he had now to reckon with the Duchess of Cleveland's rancour, expressed in a fiercely accusing letter meant to crush him utterly, which for a fortnight at least had been in the king's possession. In this letter she had assembled a number of indiscreet remarks reflecting on Charles, supposed to have been made in her presence by the Ambassador, and further had charged him with having debauched her daughter, ensconced with his

[1] *Morrison Catalogue*, IV, 284–5.

help in the nunnery of Bellchaise,[1] and accessible only to him. In a desperate last-minute attempt to ward off the consequences of her charges, which were already the subject of widespread gossip, Montagu decided to sacrifice his stepdaughter, Lady Betty Percy. If she consented to marry Lord Northumberland, then, surely, both mother and father [the Duchess of Cleveland and the king] would be placated. It was a risky proposition to put forward, for on the girl's side there was as much opposition as ever to the match. But Montagu imagined that if he had the support of Danby, it might make all the difference.

Accordingly, in a letter despatched on July 5th, he instructed his sister to hand Danby a specially-prepared letter which the king was to write to his wife [Lady Betty's mother]. As the business was one that promised to be agreeable to His Majesty, Danby would be all the more eager to act as intermediary.[2] Matters, however, had gone too far for either the Lord Treasurer or the king to be interested in any of Montagu's face-saving devices. The fat was fairly in the fire. Nothing calculated to do him the maximum harm with the king had been left unsaid by the Duchess. Like her modern sister, Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler", she was obsessed with the craving to destroy her renegade or errant lover. Moreover, it is a reasonable assumption that Charles had ceased to take much interest in the project, and that, despairing of his active co-operation, the Duchess had abandoned herself to its failure.[3]

The extremely long and rambling letter conveying the Duchess's charges reads for the most part like the truth. Nevertheless it should be treated with a certain amount of justifiable reserve, as much because of what is said, as because of what is left unsaid. Obviously we are given only such parts of the truth as suit the lady, and though Montagu, on occasion a shameless liar, is scarcely more trustworthy, yet his version of the incidents complained of deserves closer examination than it has hitherto been given. Read in conjunction with the Duchess's fuller and more emotional narrative, it affords a fairly convincing idea as to what happened.

First the Duchess's story. She found on her return to Paris, her daughter gone from the nunnery where she had placed her, and carrying on with Montagu, who provided her meals and allowed only his own servants to wait on her. They were together all day, and at night were shut up alone till 5 a.m. As a result the town buzzed with scandalous gossip. "I can hardly write for crying," declared the Duchess, "to see a child that I doted on . . . make so ill (a) return, and join with the worst of men to ruin me. For never malice was like the Ambassador's."

It was true she had behaved indiscreetly in respect to the Chevalier de Châtillon, but as to love, as Charles well knew, one was not mistress of oneself. "You ought not [to be] offended with me, since all things of this nature is [are] at an end with you and me, so that I could do you no prejudice. . . . I hope you will be just to what you said to me . . . at my house, when you told me you had letters of mine. . . . 'Madam, all that

[1] *Savile Correspondence.*
[2] Letter from Montagu dated July 5th, 1678, quoted in Browning's *Danby.*
[3] *Savile Correspondence.*

I ask of you for your own sake is, live so for the future as to make the least noise you can, and I care not who[m] you love.' Oh! this noise . . . had never been, had it not been for the Ambassador's malice."

The Duchess hoped that the king would not follow the advice of this ill man, who in his heart she knew hated His Majesty: "Were it not for his interest [he] would ruin you, if he could. For he has neither conscience nor honour, and has several times told me that in his heart he despised you and your brother . . . and wished . . . that the Parliament would send you both to travel, for you were a dull governable fool and the Duke a wilful fool." As to why Montagu should want to behave so treacherously towards her, the Duchess had an obvious explanation: she had spurned his overtures, and by way of revenge he had sought to drag her down along with her lover, the Chevalier de Châtillon.

Enlarging on the Ambassador's heinous behaviour, she described his part in a plot in which a bribe-loving Paris astrologer, previously consulted by the king, was to be used to induce His Majesty to get rid of the Lord Treasurer and the Duchess of Portsmouth. Her own contribution to their abasement had been invited, but she had declined on the plea that she bore neither any ill-will. Montagu told her that he proposed trying for Coventry's place. "And when I have it," he had boasted, "I will be damned if I do not quickly get to be Lord Treasurer, and then you and your children shall find such a friend as never was. And for the king I will find a way to furnish him so easily with money for his pocket and wenches that we will quickly out Bab May and lead the king by the nose."[1]

The above sounds remarkably like Montagu talking, and we are bound to ask whether a repeatedly snubbed lover of his cunning would have opened out so freely to her, and what his object could have been in so doing. The remarks attributed to him were clearly not invented. It is possible, however, that they were not of recent date, for the intimacy went back several years. That he should flatly deny either being or aspiring to be the Duchess's lover is quite explicable. He had his own wife's feelings to consider, and in any case there was little point in making himself out to be as big a blackguard as he was pictured. His story reads as if it might be in part the truth, and notwithstanding his description, as late as May, of Henry Sidney and the Duchess as the two people in the world he loved and esteemed the most, he would be a bold man who ventured to describe what Montagu says as a complete travesty of the facts.

Repeated in his own restrained language by that trustworthy State official, Sir Robert Southwell [Clerk of the Privy Council], Montagu's story was to this effect: For a long time past the Lord Treasurer, at the king's command, had enjoined Montagu to bring about a match between Lady Betty Percy and the Duchess of Cleveland's son. The mother of the would-be bridegroom was herself under orders to placate Montagu's wife by personal visits and generally by a show of friendliness. But it so happened that in returning one of these visits, Lady Northumberland happened to come at an inopportune moment, the Duchess being engaged with M. Châtillon, and so was refused admission. She returned home in high dudgeon, upon

[1] The Duchess's letter is given in full in Harris's *Charles II.*

which, seeing the designed marriage in danger, Montagu took it upon himself to expostulate very roundly with the Duchess regarding her lascivious behaviour with the said Monsieur, "which the whole town and country rang of, and [which] brought disgrace to the children His Majesty had by her. The Duchess, not enduring this doctrine and from such a hand, returned all upon him with rage and contempt, and 'twas his only care to get well home."[1]

It was now open war between the precious pair, and to be forearmed against her malice Montagu prevailed on a nun, who acted as messenger for the love-letters exchanged between the Duchess and her French lover, to get six of them into his hands. "Some abounded with gross and unseemly things in the trade of love, some with disrespect to His Majesty, and some of a project to marry the Dauphin with *Mademoiselle*" [*Madame's* daughter by the Duc d'Orléans]. The Duc d'Orléans assured the king, his brother, of his innocence of this audacious design, while to clear himself, Montagu showed Louis copies of the letters in which the proposition was outlined.

Such, claimed Montagu, was the whole scope of the affair. In rebuking the Duchess for the liberties she was taking in the matter of the Dauphin's marriage, he had acted in accordance with Charles's own wishes. "And as to any foul play between him and the Lady Sussex, he [Montagu] says that at her coming to Paris, the Duchess imparted to him her condition, which was so bad in point of disease, that he found out both the chirurgeon and the doctor that took her into care, and she was so sensible of his respects that she refused to take part in the following war that her mother made against him. And to prevent her mother's severity, hereupon she resolved to remove into another convent, with which removal he gave his humble assistance, and that was all."[2]

Of the two stories, that put forth by the Duchess found the readier credence, the enemies of Montagu finding the charges much to their liking. Their attitude was in no wise influenced by his supposed immorality, which in that depraved society involved no loss of credit or forfeiture of honour, but by the feeling that his luck was at an end. Henry Savile was early in the field with a potted version of the scandalous happenings, evidently supplied by his friend, the Duchess, whose help, he hoped, would allow him to profit by the changes consequent on Coventry's retirement. On July 2nd, writing to his friend, the Earl of Rochester, the last man on earth to cast the first stone, he remarked, "There are terrible doings at Paris betwixt my Lady Cleveland and her daughter Sussex. As I am a friend of the family, till the story be more complete, I will not venture at sending you the whole relation, but whilst the mother was in England, the daughter was debauched by our Ambassador, Mr. Montagu, who has lived with her in most open scandal to the wonder of the French Court and the high displeasure of this, the king being very angry with the Ambassador, and his friends and enemies now struggling at Court to support or ruin him, the latter, as I think, the likeliest."

Burnet, who probably got his information from the same quarter, confirms that part of the Duchess's story relating to the astrologer. The Ambassador,

[1], [2] Letters of Sir Robert Southwell to James, 1st Duke of Ormonde. *Ormonde Papers*, IV, July 13th, 1678.

he declares, was so bewitched by the lady that he trusted her with this secret. "But she, growing jealous of a new *amour*, took all the ways she could think of to ruin him, reserving this of the astrologer for her last shift." Burnet, who must have heard of the scandalous gossip concerning Lady Sussex, significantly enough makes no mention of her name. Are we justified in assuming that he, differing from the members of the Court circle, refused to believe the charge ?

That Montagu, feeling that the Lord Treasurer was no friend to him, should want to overthrow the Duchess of Portsmouth is quite feasible, for they were notoriously allies, if nothing more.[1] Danby had assisted her to purchase jewels from old Lady Northumberland, who prudently insisted on having the cash first. He had also helped to draw up the patent of nobility for her son, the Duke of Richmond. Even so, Montagu might have spared her his dislike, had she not been inclined to look down on his sister, Lady Harvey, whose physical charms were too inconsiderable to make her a serious rival.

Charles, naturally enough, was greatly upset by the Duchess of Cleveland's letter. These wretched Montagues were obviously bent on annoying him. First the elder brother had attempted to make love to his lawful wife ; now, the younger, failing to annex his discarded mistress, had attacked his daughter, intolerable, if true. That he condescended to meet Montagu again rather suggests he was not entirely satisfied that, as regards herself and Lady Sussex, the Duchess was telling the truth. But as to the derisory remarks, he appears to have convinced himself that there had neither been misrepresentation nor exaggeration. If there was anything he hated it was being held up to contempt. Had the offender been the privileged jester, the Duke of Buckingham, always liable to open his mouth too wide, he might have dismissed what was said as the idle and careless talk of a man unused to weighing his words ; but it was a different matter when the speaker was a cold, calculating careerist like Montagu, who most likely meant every word he uttered.

. . . . . .

What to some degree must count in Montagu's favour is the refusal of his wife to believe the disgraceful charges. She was present in Paris throughout the alleged intrigue with Lady Sussex, and would have been quick to resent any suggestion of adulterous conduct on his part. To show the unqualified nature of her belief in his innocence, she threw open the doors of her Paris home [Lord Sunderland was already installed in the Embassy] to Lady Sussex, who, protesting that she had been cruelly slandered, and clearly very ill as also financially embarrassed, had sought her hospitality. That her daughter should be under the Montagu roof was gall and wormwood to the Duchess of Cleveland, and through Lord Sunderland she endeavoured to get her home.

What was happening we learn from a letter sent by the Countess to her husband soon after he had left for London :[2] "Since I sealed up my letter,

[1] Gossip credited Danby with being her admirer, and possibly her lover.

[2] The letter was contained in the MSS. left behind by Danby, later Duke of Leeds, and is reproduced in Browning's *Danby*.

Mr. Brisbane [a government marine-agent in Paris] has been here to speak with me. His business was about Lady Sussex, to let me know that (by order) he was last night to wait upon Lady Cleveland, who[m] he found very positive about her [Lady Sussex] going to Port Royal [nunnery][1] and she had the king on her side, and that he thought, according to his orders, it was fit for him to persuade her to it, since if she should disobey the king it would be mightily to her prejudice, and it would be thought the advice of others. So I told him [that] as for disobeying the king, I thought it was very unfit for her to do it, and could I pretend to advise (which I did not) I should persuade her to obey him in all things ; but that was not necessary, for I found her resolutions that [so resolved] ; but since Mr. Montagu was no more here, and that the poor woman was really ill and taking physic for her health, I thought it would do very well if he that were employed in it would represent that to the king, and that she might make an end of that, since a strange monastery, where she knew nobody, was but a melancholy place to do it in ; but that I had nothing to say in it, but that as she was in my house and *I did believe her innocent of all was said of you*,[2] so my house was at her service so long as she thought fit, provided she lived as she ought to do in it.[3]

" Perhaps you may think me a little impertinent in troubling you with all this strife," added the sorely-worried lady, " but it is now so public a thing that I thought it not amiss to let you know all that passes about it, and to receive your orders what I shall do or say further in it. Sure there never was a more vexatious business, but I will say no more. Pray God send we may meet quickly—Yours for ever " [Spelling has been modernised, and in one or two places the text slightly amended to make it more intelligible.]

This letter, which can only have come into Danby's possession through Montagu lending it to him, was probably shown to the king. If so, it must have helped to confirm Charles's doubts about the complete accuracy of his ex-mistress's charges, and made it easier for him to agree to a meeting desired by Danby, who had his own reasons for not wishing any trouble with the ex-Ambassador. Montagu knew too much to be lightly antagonised.

For some days Montagu had been pressing the king to allow him to return to London. He reckoned that being on the spot he might better handle the situation, which delay or inaction was unlikely to improve. Also, as a protection against any overt action on Charles's part, he wanted to be elected a member of Parliament. Prudently he wrote to Danby, saying that the latter's inability to recommend him for the Secretaryship had made no difference to his feelings.[4]

[1] Eventually Lady Sussex did go there.

[2] Italics inserted by present writer.

[3] Lady Sussex, obeying the king's command, became reconciled to her mother, and remained at the nunnery of Port Royal until 1681, when, tiring of her quiet life, she returned to England and resumed normal relations with her husband. She died on May 16th, 1722, a confirmed Jacobite, aged 62. Her reputation might be judged from Rochester's poem, bracketing her with Cleveland, Portsmouth, Nell Gwyn, and others as :

"Strangers to good, but bosom friends to ill,
As boundless in their lusts as in their will."

[4] Letter from Montagu dated July 1st, 1678, given in letters published by Danby 1710.

Failing to receive any satisfaction from the king, who presumably had not yet made up his mind what to do with him, he came over without leave. Directly he reached London he visited Danby, and through his good offices met the king privately at Hampden House, adjoining the Cockpit, Whitehall. As to what happened at the meeting the Lord Treasurer, so full of information in respect to other phases of the Montagu affair, is completely silent. If the curtain is drawn aside a little, it is thanks to Sir Robert Southwell. Montagu began by giving his version of the Paris happenings, but was stopped by the king with the remark that he knew already too much of that matter, and would Montagu please declare what affair of State it was that made him quit France without permission? [For all that, remarks Sir Robert, he would soon have been commanded home.] As Montagu was unable to make any satisfactory answer, he was forbidden His Majesty's presence and court.[1]

From gossip in his usual haunts Montagu learnt that, though he had been lucky enough to escape the Tower, he must prepare himself for being thrown out of the Privy Council. The blow fell on July 12th, Danby, to whom he appealed, either being incapable of, or unwilling to, save him. As the Minister's daughter Bridget was being married to Charles's son, the Earl of Plymouth, there was some excuse for Montagu's belief that the Lord Treasurer could have prevented his disgrace. At any rate he accounted him the author of his downfall and began to prepare his revenge, finding a ready sympathiser in Lord Arlington who, sulking in his ornamental office of Lord Chamberlain, hated Danby with equal fury. As for Lady Harvey, her sole concern was that her brother should profit monetarily by his contemplated betrayal of Danby. France, she thought, would willingly part with a large sum to see the Minister, whom they regarded as the principal obstacle to their aggressive plans, ruined beyond recall. It was only right that some part of the gold that was being showered by Louis on the Opposition should find its way to her brother, who, it was clear, could not betray for pleasure.

According to what Barrillon, the French Ambassador, wrote his royal master on October 24th, 1678, Montagu, in the course of many conversations regarding Anglo-French relations, had avowed it to be in his power to ruin the Lord Treasurer by attacking him in Parliament. He was prepared to do that, if protected by France against the possible consequences of such action. The enmity which Danby bore him had arisen out of his refusal to present France with exorbitant demands as an alternative to war with England. It would be easy for him to show Parliament for what purpose the eighteen millions (six million livres for three years) were wanted, and also to demonstrate how unwilling the French king was to enter into schemes for the oppression of England and the change of government.[2]

"Mr. Montagu," added Barrillon, "believes this accusation will infallibly ruin the Treasurer . . . No one can ever be sure of anything in

[1] *Ormonde Papers*, IV.

[2] In short, Montagu would seek to prove that the money extracted from France was to be used to curtail English liberties. As for being opposed to Charles's exorbitant demands, it may be remembered that it was at his instigation the king increased his price.

ELIZABETH, THE MAD 2ND DUCHESS OF ALBEMARLE

HONORÉ COURTIN
(After the portrait by Nanteuil)

JEAN JACQUES BARRILLON

SIMON ARNAUD DE POMPONNE
(After the portrait by Nanteuil)

this country (England). . . . Mr. Montagu would not attempt it unless he saw some prospect of succeeding. . . . He hopes to be seconded by many considerable persons who will join him. However, he does not believe he will be able to bear the weight of such an undertaking if your Majesty will not also contribute to it on your part." For his services, if successful within six months, Montagu demanded a gratuity of 100,000 crowns (roughly £32,000). In addition, a fund of 100,000 livres should be set up to buy such M.P.s as were corruptible. Nothing in Barrillon's opinion could be more disagreeable to Charles than to see his principal Minister thus indicted. The numerous enemies of the Lord Treasurer would be encouraged, and it was not impossible that the Duke of York might abandon him, and even turn against him.

Barrillon, with disgusting candour, concluded his letter by expressing the belief that nothing could happen to Montagu, even to his head being in danger, that need inconvenience Louis.[1] With corresponding cynicism, that monarch bade his envoy tell Montagu that he [Louis] saw in his proposal to ruin Danby proof of his affection.[2]

That Montagu was asking a great deal of money could not be denied, but then, as was later to be said of his successor, Lord Sunderland, when similarly up for sale, " his honour forbid him selling himself at a low price." Disgraceful as was the ex-Ambassador's method of revenge—plotting with a foreign Power, in whose pay he was to effect the downfall of the leading English Minister—it was scarcely more discreditable than the simultaneous plot of Lady Harvey to ruin the Duchess of Portsmouth, Danby's ally, by supplanting her in the king's favour by the young daughter of the beautiful Mrs. Middleton, sometime Montagu's particular friend. That attractive lady, over whom the former French Ambassador, Courtin, his imagination fired by the charming stockings and jewelled garters worn by the court beauties, was wont to rave, had for some unaccountable reason failed to appeal to Charles, but it was thought the daughter, presumably agreeable to being thus exploited, would have better luck. The Frenchwoman, alert and very wideawake whenever it was a case of her interests and preserves being threatened, nipped the manœuvre in the bud by getting both mother and daughter shunted from Court. *Vashti was still queen.* As for the Duchesse Mazarin, whose jealousy of the Duchess of Portsmouth, her more wily rival, Lady Harvey had sought to inflame, she thought it safer to busy herself with smaller game.

. . . . . .

Though aware that he had nothing but evil to expect from Montagu, always a dangerous fellow, Danby was reluctant to believe the compromising letters would be used against him. He thought that the ex-Ambassador was himself too deeply committed to want the unpleasant facts ventilated. Once again, as he had shown in his dealing with Buckingham, turned by neglect from friend to foe, he was incapable of appreciating the lengths to which a man of this calibre in search of revenge would go. If not before,

[1] Dalrymple, I, 249.
[2] *Recueil des Instructions données aux Ambassadeurs de France*, by J. J. Jusserand.

then on Montagu becoming M.P. for the county of Huntingdon, a tribute to the Montagu sense of family consolidarity, Danby should have taken warning and prepared for battle.

The ex-Ambassador would have preferred to represent Northampton, where his father's influence was normally all-powerful, but finding that he was likely to be opposed, persuaded his kinsmen, the Earls of Manchester and Sandwich, whose heirs were both under age, to nominate him and Robert Apreece for the county of Huntingdon.[1] Thus entitled to the immunity of a member of Parliament he avoided arrest.

Dalrymple suggests that Halifax *The Trimmer* joined in the plot to depose Danby, but Miss Foxcroft, in her masterly biography of the statesman, advances the theory that he was no other than an unconscious tool: "The scrupulous care with which Halifax through life abstained from courting French interference, the special antagonism which he always displayed towards France, renders Dalrymple's interpretation [of Barrillon's dispatches] from the first a suspicious one, and a curious circumstance strengthens our conviction. In a very bitter diatribe against Montagu, written by Halifax some years later, he mentions as current suspicion the secret understanding between the ex-Ambassador and France on this occasion. It seems impossible that he should have drawn attention to the charge, if it could have been preferred with equal justice against himself."

At all events Halifax joined up with the Country Party or Opposition, headed by the unstable, violent and utterly unscrupulous party manager of genius, the Earl of Shaftesbury, who, with singular disregard for the truth, later disavowed having had anything to do with the ex-Ambassador. Protected by this solid phalanx, Montagu felt tolerably safe from arrest, at least while Parliament was sitting. That he was ripe for mischief was clear from his combined activities.

He had already shown several of the incriminating letters to various fellow M.P.s, including Lord Russell [his wife's brother-in-law]; he had continued his meetings with Barrillon, using his sister's house as rendezvous, and he had conferred with most of the political leaders known to be violently opposed to Danby. That statesman, deploring his folly in disregarding Sir John Reresby's hint that Montagu definitely intended to use the letters, was now ready to strike. On the plea that in May, 1677, Montagu had plotted with the Papal Nuncio in Paris, he gave orders for the compromising letters to be seized. This cock-and-bull story had been forwarded on to him by Temple, who in turn had received it from M. Olivencranz, the Swedish Minister at The Hague.[2] The Pope's Nuncio was that same Con[3] who had been so friendly with Montagu's uncle, the Lord Abbot; the plotting was alleged to have taken place at the house of the Abbé de Sures, and the reason for the meetings was supposed to be the treaty of marriage between the King of Spain and the Duc d'Orléans' daughter [Charles's niece], as to which Montagu had received no instructions from the king.[4] Burnet thinks that Montagu may have used Con as a source of information;

[1] Hist. MSS. Comm. Report, XIII, Pt. 6, pp. 13, 24. *Victoria History of Huntingdonshire.*
[2] Temple to Danby, November 5th, 1678. [3] Burnet.
[4] Danby to Temple, November 22nd, 1678.

but as for plotting with him, the idea was preposterous.[1] Little wonder that the House of Commons, when the reason for the seizure of Montagu's papers was explained to them, protested vigorously, the action being unsupported by any sworn evidence of treason.

Prior to taking this step Danby had discussed with Henry Guy, Secretary to the Treasury, various ways of dealing with Montagu: prosecuting him for quitting his duties without the king's leave: depriving him of the lucrative office of keeper of the Great Wardrobe, or at least of a large part of the emoluments. Neither course had been found practicable. To get the better of a dangerous foe the Lord Treasurer was willing to strain the ends of the law; indeed, in readiness to drop scruples when they stood in his way, he was no better than the ex-Ambassador. As addicts to shady tactics they were well matched. Nor, when cornered, did Danby disdain the gentle arts of blackmail. On Buckingham threatening to join his accusers, he warned him that he was prepared to expose certain dark passages in his past.

The heated debates which followed the seizure of Montagu's papers temporarily diverted the attention of Parliament from the Popish Plot of Titus Oates. Though present throughout, the ex-Ambassador only thought fit to intervene towards the close. Amidst rising excitement, he declared that the commandeering of his papers had been prompted by the desire to secure certain letters which reflected on a great Minister of State [clearly identifiable as Danby]. Anticipating such action, he had prudently hidden the more valuable of his papers, but was ready to disclose their whereabouts to Lord Russell and other M.P.s to be chosen by the House.

The box containing the letters was found where indicated, but as the key had been removed, it was necessary to call in a locksmith. From the contents of the casket Montagu withdrew the notorious letters dated January 16th, and March 25th, 1678, respectively, the second being that in which Danby had offered to sell out to France.

The acrid tone of the discussion revealed what was scarcely a secret: the general dislike felt for Danby, possibly the most unpopular Minister ever employed by Charles, though as competent as any. It did more; it disclosed how little prepared to champion his cause were those whom he had for some time bribed with jobs and gifts of money. Even the M.P.s notoriously in the pay of France shared the common sentiment of antipathy, their speeches suggesting that they were the most virtuous patriots who ever lived.

The references to the king were none the less biting for being guarded and oblique. One speaker, who permitted himself to say that it was a very ordinary thing for kings to get money from one another, as in Edward IV.'s and Henry VII.'s day, was sharply answered by another, who said that King John's Ministers made him a pensioner of the Pope, and that it was just as great a crime to make Charles a pensioner of the French king!

Montagu was fortunate in having the House for the most part with him. Even so he failed to emerge from the debate without a severe shaking.

[1] Danby always persisted in the belief that Montagu had gone over to Rome. Both he and Lord Sunderland, he asserted, were frequently at Mass during their periods of service in Paris. . . . "The Duke of York told me also that Mr. Montagu was reconciled to their Church."—Note by Danby. *Les Derniers Stuarts*, by Campana de Cavelli.

First Lord Dunblane [Danby's son] asserted he had often heard him describe the House of Commons as full of loggerheads and boobies. Then Charles Bertie [Danby's brother-in-law] produced two letters in which Montagu had given warning of young Ruvigny's journey to England in January, 1678, with the express design of using his relationship to Lady Russell, his cousin-germane, to win over to the French cause Lord Russell and other malcontents of the Court. Montagu, in reply, maintained that an Ambassador's business was to send what intelligence he could get, but he could not always vouch for its truth. His wife [Lady Northumberland] laughed at the idea of Ruvigny doing France any service by reason of being related to Lady Russell, and had reassured that lady [her sister] on this point.

Heckled about his own suspicious letters to Danby, Montagu declared that he had been for peace, because he saw no intention on the part of the Ministers for war. Had his advice been followed, they would have got better peace terms [the peace of Nimuegen had been reached on July 31st after ten years of war], but Louis distrusted Danby, saying, " I find my Lord Treasurer has so much the secret of being Treasurer of England that he would be also Treasurer of France," and so would no longer treat.

For tactical reasons, and in deference to the time-honoured doctrine that the king can do no wrong, the Speaker did not read the postscript of approval attached by Charles to the infamous letter of March 25th. Nevertheless, the fact that the House elected to impeach the Lord Treasurer and ultimately force him to resign, did strike at the monarch. Thereafter no Minister performing an unlawful or unconstitutional act could plead *force majeure*, or that he was merely obeying the king.[1] As the result of long-drawn-out proceedings lasting well into the spring of 1679, Danby was committed to the Tower, where he was to languish for the next five years. That he received a free pardon from the king [disregarded by the Commons], coupled with a Marquisate and a pension, in no wise compensated him for his disgrace and suffering. Sensing what was behind them he was only the more revolted, for these so-called rewards were designed to absorb the attention of Parliament, and correspondingly lessen the strain on the king and the Duke of York arising out of the Popish Plot. In short, with a gold collar attached to his neck and a silken coat wrapped round his body, he had been mercilessly thrown to the wolves—abandoned by the monarch in loyalty to whom he had suppressed the true facts of the monetary demands on France, thus rendering an adequate defence of himself impossible.

His mistakes were many, but none so gross as failing to profit by the experience of other men, notably Clarendon (whom he had helped to pull down), similarly exalted by Charles, and afterwards allowed to fall into disgrace. From his own ruin he had to learn how little any of the Stuarts could be relied upon to protect a dangerously unpopular Minister, even though his unpopularity had been incurred by all-too-faithful obedience to the royal commands.

[1] Nearly three hundred years later, i.e., in the Nuremberg trial of the leading Nazis, the same principle was reaffirmed, the principle that no indicted person of authority can take shelter behind the orders of a superior.

Heavy as was his punishment, it was deserved. By acquiescing in a policy which he knew to be wrong and opposed to the best interests of the country, he had betrayed his trust. Had he been as great in character as he was in statecraft and in the art of manipulating Parliament, he would have preferred dismissal to Charles's dishonourable favour. The historian Echard saw in Danby's fall the workings of retributive justice: "This great man who had taken such unreasonable pains in the House of Commons to put down the famous Earl of Clarendon, now felt the same hardships and met with the like fate as to his honour, and a worse prospect as to his life."

A few weeks before Danby's disgrace, Lord Shaftesbury gave this mordant description of the political situation: "March 6th, 1679. The king . . . hath brought his affairs to that pass that there is not a person in the world, man or woman, at home or abroad, that dares rely upon him, or put any confidence in his word or friendship. . . . His brother, his Minister,[1] his mistress,[2] play the game into one another's hands, and perfectly govern all matters. By this conduct not only the government, but the nation itself, is become despicable abroad."[3]

Parliament, unaware that Montagu was to be paid for effecting the Lord Treasurer's ruin, commended rather than condemned his action, saying that as Danby had begun to fall on him, he had a perfect right to defend himself. Had the positions been reversed, it is certain that Danby, who had no compunction about breaking his political opponents, would have been equally as unsparing of Montagu. The opinion of the court was eloquently expressed by the Duke of York, writing to the Prince of Orange on December 20th, 1678: "I am confident that there never was so abominable an action as this of Mr. Montagu's, and so offensive to His Majesty—all honest men abhor him for it." The letter would have carried more weight had James specified who the honest men were, and where in his camp they were to be found.

. . . . . .

While the Lord Treasurer was undergoing his humiliating ordeal, Montagu remained watchful. To be caught unawares by a sudden prorogation or dissolution of Parliament might mean his being unceremoniously clapped into the Tower. That should not happen if he could prevent it, for as he remarked to the man whom he employed as *look-out*, "he had no mind to eat meat of others' dressing, when he must either poison or starve."

Parliament broke up on December 30th. Forewarned, he did not come to the House, but hid first in Fleet Street, and then in Lime Street in the City, where during a stay of three weeks he was frequently visited by Barrillon. During the long dark nights he stole out to a neighbouring tavern, there to be joined by the Ambassador, Lady Harvey and various friends, the conversation mostly turning on the future of the Duke of Monmouth.

Montagu's plan was to cross to France and remain until it was safe to return. For this purpose he hired a Dutch ship of 130 tons, but the stormy weather made him so ill that, on reaching Queenborough, he elected to

[1] Danby. [2] Duchess of Portsmouth.
[3] Christie's *Shaftesbury*.

continue overland to Dover. Suitably disguised, he was just about to step on to a small boat that was to take him to Calais or Boulogne, when he was seized by officers of the Crown. He pledged himself not to leave the kingdom and returned to London, where, on seeing his wife and Lord Russell, and being freed from further interference, he quickly recovered his good humour.

He continued to represent the county of Huntingdon, and took an active part in promoting the Exclusion Bill, sharing Shaftesbury's dislike for the Duke of York, whom he regarded as one of the main props of Danby. By craftily instilling into the mind of the Duchess of Portsmouth the idea that the king might declare her son, the Duke of Richmond, as his lawful successor, he strove to win her over to the policy of excluding James. At the same time he encouraged Monmouth to believe that Parliament envisaged him as the appropriate heir to the Throne. This double-dealing, so characteristic of the age, came as naturally to Montagu as to Charles, though he was scarcely so skilful a performer. In the business of encouraging people to believe what most flattered their hopes and ambitions, neither had a superior.

If Montagu preferred Monmouth to James as Charles's successor, it was not out of any honourable sentiment, but because he calculated he had more to gain from a weak-kneed king. In view, however, of Louis's lukewarm attitude to the project, Montagu can scarcely have looked upon the proposition as other than a desperate gamble. How he, a shrewd, practical-minded politician, could bring himself to ignore the legitimate claims of James's two daughters, Mary and Anne, not to mention the former's husband, William of Orange, is very difficult to understand.

The arguments he used to secure Louis's approval of Monmouth's succession were, at the best, sadly unconvincing. On the strength of Monmouth's own dubious statement, he suggested that Charles secretly wished his son to be declared Prince of Wales and only wanted the support of the French monarch to bring it about. Then with unpatriotic guile he urged that a disputed succession would benefit France. A final argument was that if the hopes some entertained of the Prince of Orange coming to the Throne were ended, and the fears which others nourished of the Duke of York succeeding were similarly removed, the severities against the Catholics in England would cease—a matter of considerable importance to France.[1]

While unwilling to discourage Montagu's intrigues on Monmouth's behalf, Louis had a pretty good idea that the feelings attributed to Charles by his foolishly aspiring son were a travesty of the truth. Any uncertainty he may have had on the point was swept away by a dispatch from Barrillon [November 21st, 1680] reporting that Monmouth having declared in the Lords that he would vote for the Exclusion Bill because he thought the king's safety involved in it, Charles, an attentive listener to the debate, was heard to exclaim : " It is a Judas-kiss which he gives me !"

Having got Montagu to do his dirty work, the French king showed no indecent haste to settle accounts, and the ex-Ambassador had further to debase himself by the most cringing appeals both to Barrillon and Pomponne, the French Foreign Minister. His letters, which repose in the French archives,

[1] Barrillon to Louis, January 30th, 1679.

are a permanent memorial to his dishonour. When Danby had been in the Tower fully six months, Montagu, having found the intercession of Barrillon ineffective, addressed himself direct to Pomponne, though not under his own signature or in his own handwriting. He had, he said, accomplished beyond his utmost hopes all he had engaged himself to do, and there was no reason why the matter, nearly eight months old, should not be settled as arranged. The French Ambassador knew that to carry out the bargain he had been compelled to refuse all other proposals, however advantageous. This had cost him 60,000 crowns. He was aware how inviolable was the word of the French king, but he was persecuted on every side, and unless financially relieved as promised, he would either lose his credit and reputation, or be reduced to the necessity of selling his estates.[1]

This urgent appeal for payment for his corrupt activities meeting with no better fate than the others, Montagu vented his spleen on Barrillon, who in self-protection took up his case with Louis. "I have had trouble enough," he wrote, "to defend myself these six months against his [Montagu's] demands for payment of the sum promised him for the ruin of the Lord Treasurer. . . . I have always tried to make him understand the affair was not entirely completed, and that very fully assured of what had been promised him, he ought not to be uneasy whether payment were made a little sooner or a little later. But he is not impressed by this reasoning . . . and would himself have solicited in person what he pretends is owing, if he could have torn himself away from the very distracted English affairs, in which he has taken so great a part."[2]

Referring to the question of support for Monmouth's pretensions, Barrillon said that Montagu would have guessed from his reserve that Louis was not disposed to support so unjust and chimerical a design, but in other matters they had managed to agree very well. The letter went on: "He has often spoken to me of getting Lord Shaftesbury on to your Majesty's interests, and alleges that it would not be impossible if a considerable sum were employed. . . . By these proper means new embarrassments could be caused the king of England, and Lord Shaftesbury would be all the bolder for being secretly supported by your Majesty. But it would be difficult . . . to prevent him [Shaftesbury] promoting the cause of the Duke of Monmouth, or of the Prince of Orange. His designs are difficult enough to penetrate, and perhaps his principal aim is the establishment of a republic, of which he would seek to be chief."

Barrillon, in concluding his long and discursive letter, suggested that he should be allowed to state a date on which Montagu would be paid. If any more M.P.s were to be gained over, he could think of no two persons better equipped than Montagu and his sister, Lady Harvey, for this purpose, and for traversing all the designs of the Court. It was through Lady Harvey that he had continued to employ at Brussels a person named Bulstrode, who, as he had learnt from M. Louvois, had been useful to the service of France.

[1] Montagu to Pomponne, October 26th, 1679.

[2] In July, 1679, after the second reading of the Exclusion Bill, the king dissolved Parliament, and at the August elections for the new Parliament, Montagu had been returned for Northampton borough, the family constituency.

This letter was written on December 14th, 1679, but several months had to elapse before Montagu touched any part of his promised reward. When he was paid 50,000 livres (£1,500) a year later [December 5th, 1680], Barrillon pressed for a further payment of the same amount, saying the excuse of the bills of exchange not coming in fast enough would not work, and in the present conjuncture Montagu might be of great use to him. In all, by persistently badgering Barrillon, who, it must be confessed, felt Montagu had a genuine grievance, the ex-Ambassador managed to screw 50,000 crowns (£16,000), or half what was due to him, out of Louis, whose growing financial embarrassments tended to make him rather close-fisted.

It is easy to understand Barrillon's interest in Shaftesbury, who with his demagogic gifts aroused the populace to extraordinary enthusiasm. At the end of 1679, when the French Ambassador was wondering whether it was possible to add him to those already on the pay-roll of France, he was proving a bigger thorn than ever in the side of Charles. Dismissed from his position as President of the newly-constituted Privy Council, he was agitating for the reassembly of Parliament, which since July had stood dissolved, and doing his best to popularise Monmouth. Within a month of being given his *congé* by the king, he was being offered the First Commissionership of the Treasury, but his terms, the divorce of the barren queen and the dismissal of James, newly returned from Flanders, had proved too much for Charles, fortified as he was by a fresh monetary compact with Louis. Henry Sidney, no doubt instigated by his nephew, Lord Sunderland, now the king's chief adviser, asked Montagu to talk Shaftesbury into taking office again, but nothing resulted. The fact that Montagu was entrusted with this mission speaks volumes for the intimacy of his relations with Shaftesbury, and makes nonsense of the Dowager Countess of Sunderland's remark, "My Lord Shaftesbury says he never had anything to do with Mr. Montagu, nor never will."[1]

In the Exclusion Bill debate which took place on the reassembly of Parliament in the autumn of 1680, Montagu, who had previously been conspicuous for the dexterity of his arguments, was inclined to be rhetorical rather than logical. Till the Bill was passed, the king, he said, was exposed to the malice of the Papists and the solicitations of the Duke's friends. Saving the king from the malice of Rome was as good a service as bringing the king from Brussels [at the Restoration]. The Bill reached the Lords on November 15th, and was there defeated by the spirited action of Halifax, "Jotham of piercing wit and pregnant thought," who was more than a match for Shaftesbury and Essex, the champions of the measure. Very angry, Montagu in the Lower House charged Halifax with advising the dissolution in July, 1679: . . . "You can do no less than vote him an enemy to the king and kingdom," he told his fellow M.P.s, "a promoter of Popery and betrayer of the liberties of the people," and proceeded to suggest that Halifax be removed from the king's Council.[2]

[1] *Sidney Diary*, March 22nd, 1680.

[2] The new Council of thirty, which included Shaftesbury, Temple, Essex and Sunderland. Disregarding the recommendation, Charles dissolved Parliament on January 18th, 1681, and a new one was summoned to meet at Oxford on March 21st.

Barrillon's correspondence with his royal master, throughout the years 1680–81, reveals in almost meticulous detail the sordid story of Montagu's repeated efforts to recover from Louis the remainder of the amount agreed upon for the betrayal of Danby. Though some of the subtleties of Montagu's reasoning, as well as the motives by which he was now beset, escaped the French Ambassador, he was clever enough to realise that so utterly unprincipled and immensely ambitious a man was capable of making a complete *volte-face*, without being conscious of any glaring inconsistency in his behaviour. Montagu's natural cupidity, coupled with awareness of having fully earned his bargained pay, reconciled him to the degrading task of dunning Louis through Barrillon for his other 50,000 crowns. His avariciousness drove him to suggest fresh bargains with Louis, realising that until he was paid it would be fatal to give the impression of wanting to steer an independent, much less a hostile, course, a point which was not lost on the shrewd Barrillon.[1]

On the other hand, fears for his life and estate, if he were found out, acted as a powerful deterrent, especially as most of the supposedly corruptible M.P.s were showing reluctance to have direct dealings with Barrillon, as he frankly admitted.[2] These fears went arm-in-arm with the desire to be readmitted into Charles's good graces, so that he might still fulfil his ambition of being a great officer of state. In his remark[3] to Henry Sidney [August 11th, 1679] that he was out of politics, and in town when the court was at Windsor, the note of chagrin rings out true and clear.

On March 22nd, 1680, the Dowager Countess of Sunderland, Sidney's sister, hears that Montagu has vainly endeavoured to make his peace at court.[4] By December the position was such that Barrillon was constrained to warn his royal master that "Mr. Montagu would willingly be well with the court, and have a great place, if it were possible: to begin with he would be very glad to spend some time as Ambassador Extraordinary to France."[5]

Montagu's championship of Monmouth's hazy claims to the succession was, it is fairly clear, no more than a desperate form of insurance against interminably being left out in the cold. He did not like to think that his career in the government service was finished, and he had come to the conclusion there was no future in being Louis's lackey, paid or unpaid. Above all, his pride, despite the violence done it, rebelled against the idea of self-imposed servitude to a foreign prince for reasons which ceased now to excite him. Barrillon found him too useful to relish the idea of his being alienated from the French cause; hence he warmly seconded all his attempts to get paid. Though he did not disclose to him all France's connections with the English politicians, he had in his bribery campaign largely to work through Montagu or the sister, which was one and the same thing.

[1] Barrillon to Louis, December 5th, 1680: "The sum owing to Montagu is sufficient to prevent him acting contrary to French interests."

[2] Barrillon to Louis, December 5th, 1680: "The greater part of these connections, [those bribed] could not be made by myself; few were to be found that would directly treat, or have any connection with me, by which they might have exposed their lives and persons."

[3], [4] *Sidney Diary.* [5] Barrillon to Louis, December 5th, 1680.

Consequently Montagu knew most of those in Louis's pay, information by which in his various political manœuvres he did not hesitate to profit.

To a large extent it was Charles's refusal to have any further truck with him, as much as the renewal of the king's pensionary relations with Louis, that kept Montagu in the French camp. There, at least, he felt safe. Knowing how merciless Charles could be to those unfortunate enough to incur his hate, he had to be ready at the shortest notice to flee to the Continent.

Louis preferred doing business with his brother king, and would gladly have dropped his humbler English clients. Only a warning from Barrillon dated September 22nd, 1681, as to the folly of putting all his eggs into one basket prevented him from entirely dropping the intrigues with the Popular Party. The Ambassador mentioned that two days before, Montagu had made a new business offer to him. He was, he said, in a position to do Louis a service as considerable as the fall of Danby, but that before he engaged in any new enterprise, which meant hazarding his head or his fortune, he must first be paid the balance due from the old transaction. Barrillon explained he had done his best to pump him, but all that could be got out of him was that the service contemplated would ensure the king of France being in no danger from England for a long time.

To begin with, Barrillon thought that Montagu was seeking to find out exactly how Louis and Charles stood to each other, but later he came to the conclusion that Montagu had something solid to propose which would have the effect of neutralising the intrigues and cabals of the Prince of Orange. He told Louis that he would try and get him to be more explicit, concluding with the remark that Montagu was "a man who may be of very great help, and through whom I can do more than through many others. To tell the truth, he is discontented and thinks he has been neglected; but all might be put right if your Majesty gave orders for the payment of the balance due to him." Montagu's less tetchy attitude to Barrillon rather suggests that Louis's persistent creditor did get a further payment on account. But the second business proposition seems to have vanished into thin air.

In November of that same year [1681] both Montagu and Charles were professing readiness by their respective means to help Louis to the same objective—the possession of Luxemburg, one of the chief barriers of the Low Countries, and in French hands a definite menace to the peace of Europe. According to Barrillon [dispatch dated November 24th, 1681] Montagu promised, with the help of his friends, to hinder Parliament (or the court, if necessary) from opposing the design, or giving one farthing to help the Spaniards. Luxemburg, or some other place, could be Louis's if the affair were properly concerted with the right Parliamentarians.

Barrillon, tongue in cheek, told Montagu that he doubted whether Louis wanted Luxemburg, especially if it had to be taken by force. At the same time he questioned the ability of five or six malcontents to impose their will on a House of Commons incited by the Spaniards and other enemies of France. Montagu agreed that in so uncertain a country as England no one could promise assured success, but he was confident that any anti-French move could be safely countered by means which he proceeded to describe.

These amounted to bringing certain accusations against the Duke of York and the three leading Ministers, refusing to vote supplies, and pressing for the condemnation of Lord Danby (presumably his execution).

For once, the French Ambassador was not impressed by Montagu's treasonable and reckless talk. He thought that Louis, after all, was right in preferring an alliance with Charles. Only if that monarch proved false should they turn to Montagu and the malcontents. In the end, while professing loyalty to Holland and Spain, Charles executed his usual money-deal with Louis.[1] That perfidious monarch, occupied as ever in the false pursuit of glory, only raised the siege of Luxemburg when it occurred to him that he might be going too far, even for Charles, who would as lief dupe France as the other two countries. Had there been in England any truly great and trusted leader, it would have gone hard with the arch-dissembler who occupied the Throne. One with the fiery eloquence and energy of Shaftesbury, and the statecraft, wisdom and balanced mentality of Halifax, might have been the means of realising the hopes of *The Trimmer*, as expressed earlier in the reign: "I do not despair but that the English, who used to go into France for their breeding, may have the honour once to teach them better manners."[2]

No member of the Montagu family ever stooped so low as did the ex-Ambassador in those fateful years, 1678–81. If his uncle, the Lord Abbot, had conspired with France, it was in the interest of the king, Charles I., whose throne was threatened. In his own case, collusion with France was purely a matter of finance, originally inspired, it is true, by the desire for revenge on Danby, but since then wholly divorced from passionate considerations. What made his offence all the more heinous was the knowledge, only partially shared by members of the Country or Popular Party, that England's interest lay in opposing the dangerously swollen power of France, and strengthening the hands of those Protestant States willing to stand up against Louis. The difference between Montagu and Sir Robert Walpole, sometime his contemporary, was that whereas Walpole, to cite Sir Richard Lodge's phrase, used rogues for his own ends but was not himself a rogue, Montagu was both a rogue and a user of rogues.

Disgraceful as Montagu's behaviour must seem to all, it was only relatively bad. From the king to the Earl of Sunderland, his trusted adviser, all in the court clique were as ready to take Louis's gold as the most venal member of the Opposition. While Montagu was struggling to obtain his Judas pieces of silver, Barrillon, on the French king's orders, was offering rich presents to Sunderland and the Duchess of Portsmouth [pardonable in her case because she was a Frenchwoman] to keep Charles sweet towards France. If they were not immediately accepted, it was not because of any scruples, but because, to secure Sunderland, as the Duchess made clear to Barrillon, a great deal of money was needed. *He had to consult his pride and dignity which would have been lowered by an unduly small bribe.*[3] The epicurean but

[1] Barrillon to Louis, December 1st, 1681: "After much bargaining the king (Charles) has agreed to allow our seizure of Luxemburg in consideration of our paying him a million livres."—Dalrymple [appendix].

[2] Sir George Savile (later Marquis of Halifax) to Sir William Temple, 1666.

[3] Present writer's comment.

far from refined Earl of St. Albans looked upon Louis's presents as so legitimate a perquisite that on one occasion, failing to be remembered, he bluntly reminded the French Ambassador that he expected a gift. To satisfy him Louis disgorged between £1,000 and £1,500 in money, along with a diamond box previously offered to Lord Holles, since deceased, "the man of all England for whom the different cabals have the most consideration."[1]

There being no check on Barrillon's disbursements, we have to take his word that all the bribes he deposes to were actually paid out. Yet he retired possessed of such large means that Mme. de Sévigné, his particular friend, thought this unexpected affluence worthy of comment. Is it possible that his book-keeping was as crooked as his methods with the mercenary-minded and low-principled Restoration politicians?

It may explain, though it cannot possibly excuse, Montagu's discreditable commerce with France that, since being discharged from his post as Ambassador, he had been rather straitened for funds. When in Paris, not only had he spent money right and left, but he had been forced to manage on only part of his salary and expenses. Still owing to him was the large sum of £22,000,[2] which, now that he was at variance with the king, he saw no hope of recovering. Beyond that, the building of his extravagant new Bloomsbury palace, Montagu House, replete with all the novelties to be found in the finest French mansions, had sucked up most of his available cash. Furthermore his association with the prodigal Duchesse Mazarin, always desperately short of money, was not without cost. That had come to an end in the spring of 1680, as we learn from the Countess of Sunderland: "Mr. Montagu goes no more to Madame Mazarin. The town says he is forbid; whether his love or his politics were too pressing, I know not. . . . He is reduced to spending much of his time at Lady Oxford's."[3]

A wit has remarked that "people who are dreadfully devoted to their wives are apt from mere habit to get devoted to other people's wives as well". Montagu, the proud father of a son and heir, born on August 8th, 1679, and named after him, was as fond a husband as that depraved epoch could show, and if he was still the opposite of a saint, the probabilities are that neither in the Duchesse Mazarin's nor Lady Oxford's case were his attentions those of a lover. He was at this time politically too awkwardly fixed to want to continue sexual adventures, the prime amusement of so many of his class. Both ladies were amusing, friends as much of his sister as of himself, and no doubt proved a welcome relief to the decorous society which his wife introduced into the home. The main appeal of the Duchesse was her relationship to Charles, whom she was expected to influence to Montagu's advantage. As soon as the king realised this, he ordered Montagu's visits to cease.

. . . . . .

While by one shift and another Danby was vainly striving to ward off disgrace, the reward of too faithfully serving the king, Montagu was going through the humiliating ordeal of seeing himself ignored in the affairs of

[1] Barrillon to Louis, December 14th, 1679.
[2] Cal. State Papers, Domestic, 1683.
[3] *Sidney Diary.*

his stepdaughter, Lady Betty Percy, whom with his keen business instinct he had visualised as a magnificent bargaining-counter. She was entirely under the control, and largely at the mercy, of the designing Dowager Duchess of Northumberland who, in craftiness as well as in ability to feather her nest, was quite Montagu's equal. His boasts of being able to neutralise, or at least to cramp, the power conferred on the old schemer by the late Earl's unfortunate will, had proved empty and hollow. Even the mediation of the Lord Chancellor, from which much had been hoped, had failed to move the formidable dame, who remained just as unreasonable and unaccommodating as before. Had Montagu been on good terms with the Court, he might have persuaded the king to exercise a moderating influence on the old lady, though it is not certain she would have heeded him any more than she did Montagu, despising them both.

As for Montagu's wife, the girl's natural guardian, her wishes were treated by grandmother and granddaughter alike as of no account, or totally ignored. Of the two the Dowager was the more polite. The other, puffed up with vanity and disposed to be secretive about her actions, deliberately kept away from the maternal abode, pretending to resent having been given a stepfather. Such conduct greatly upset Lady Northumberland, whose nature was gentle and conciliatory, and the fact that she was powerless to remedy the situation added to her distress.

In the autumn of 1679, being then but a chit of twelve, the heiress was courted by Henry Cavendish, the sixteen-year-old Earl of Ogle, third but only surviving son of the Duke of Newcastle. Lady Northumberland, on being informed, remarked to her mother-in-law that if Lady Betty liked Lord Ogle best, she would be well advised to accept him. Only later on did she discover that, so far from exercising an uncontrolled choice, the self-willed girl, either from caprice or a desire to be awkward, had barred herself to all suitors but Ogle. It was essentially a marriage of convenience, the union of two great families with no pretence of love on either side, defensible only as a splendid match in the purely materialistic sense. The date of the marriage was March 27th, 1680, but as the youthful bridegroom had first to recruit his health by Continental travel, the honeymoon was temporarily deferred. Opinions differ as to the merits or demerits of the sickly bridegroom. The Dowager Countess of Sunderland thought him the saddest creature her young relative could have picked on. Others spoke of him as a marvellously brisk, forwardly young man of quick and ready understanding. It really did not matter which was correct, for on November 1st, 1680, some weeks after his wife had recovered from an attack of measles, he died of influenza.

To justify her behaviour, Lady Ogle wrote to her austere and outspoken aunt, Lady Rachel Russell, of whom she stood in some awe. The answer she got was that she could expect no happiness until she sought her mother's pardon,[1] advice that did not please the spoilt heiress, who continued to conduct herself badly. Scarcely had the unfortunate bridegroom been buried than the young widow had a crowd of fresh suitors buzzing round her, among them the Duke of Somerset, Lord Northumberland (the Duchess of

[1] *Lady Rachel Russell's Letters.*

Cleveland's son), who, despite the bitter quarrel between his mother and the stepfather, still fancied his chance; the Earl of Kingston, Lord Cranborne, son of the Earl of Salisbury, and Thomas Thynne, the wealthy squire of Longleat, Wilts. Apart from his riches which had led to his being nicknamed "Tom of Ten Thousand"[1] [a year], Thynne (the particular friend of the Duke of Monmouth) had little to recommend him to the fancy of a girl of fourteen. As great an obstacle as the disparity in their ages was their incompatibility of temperament. Thynne, "rich and senseless", to quote Rochester, an excellent judge of rakes, could hardly hope to agree with a bride just in her teens.

But on various pretexts all the suitors, save Thynne, were disposed of. The most eligible, the Duke of Somerset, on discovering that until she came of age Lady Ogle was only entitled to £4,000 of her large income, sheered off. As for the Earl of Kingston, he might have had a chance had not the young lady remembered something to his prejudice uttered by her late husband.

Left in entire possession of the field, Thynne sought to ingratiate himself with the young widow, helped by the active connivance of Major Brett[2] and his sister, Lady Katharine Brett, at whose house Lady Ogle was a constant visitor. Nevertheless, the man's age, and the fact that he was neither a peer nor heir to a peer, told against him. To win over the grandmother he plied her with money, while to encourage Major Brett, he promised him £10,000 on the day of the marriage. Eventually, by pledging himself to lavish money on her, Thynne got Lady Ogle's consent to become his wife on completing a full year's widowhood. Not only was she to retain £3,000 a year as pin-money out of her own estate, but, in addition, she was to enjoy a jointure of £2,000 a year out of his. That in a few years' time she would have all the money she could hope to spend was a fact apparently overlooked by the impulsive heiress.

Fearful of Lady Ogle's other relatives interfering and possibly stopping the marriage, he pleaded with his unenthusiastic bride-to-be to hasten the date of the wedding, and to enlist her sympathy even went so far as to feign melancholy. She remained unmoved, and not until October 30th were the nuptials with this man old enough to be her father celebrated. It was a hushed-up affair, performed at Sion House, the Isleworth [Middlesex] residence of the Earls of Northumberland, by a clergyman specially imported from Longleat. From the ceremony, despite the liberal bribe she had received, old Lady Northumberland with characteristic cunning absented herself. The bride, instead of travelling to Longleat, insisted on remaining with her grandmother and keeping her own apartments. As a result she could claim to be married *de jure* but not *de facto*; and with some assurance could assert for her mother's benefit that she was never properly wedded to her elderly suitor.

Three weeks before the hole-in-the-corner wedding, Charles Bertie, who had an inkling of what was being planned, wrote to his niece, the Countess

[1] Also the *Issachar* of Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel.*

[2] Brett was joined with old Lady Northumberland in the guardianship of Lady Ogle.

of Rutland: " 'Tis believed all things are agreed betwixt Lady Ogle and Mr. Thynne."[1] It is scarcely possible that Montagu and his wife should have remained in entire ignorance of the sordid business, and since they do not appear to have interfered, the inference is either they were allowed no say in the matter, or promised that nothing would come of Thynne's suit. Favouring the latter theory is the remark of Lady Ogle's mother, on being told she had fled without leaving any word of her movements with Thynne: " If she is really married, she had better return to him."

What had happened reads like a page out of Dumas. On November 9th, on the pretence of going to buy plate at a goldsmith's in Lombard Street, Lady Ogle drove from her grandmother's house to the Old Exchange, and having instructed the coachman and footmen to wait for her, joined Dorothy Osborne, wife of Sir William Temple, with whom she was proposing to travel to Holland. Having hung round till 11 p.m. in the vain hope of spotting their mistress, the puzzled servants returned to Sion House, there to describe, but not to explain, their strange experience. The old lady at once got in touch with Major Brett, who drove to Whitehall to inform the king, but got little satisfaction. Vexed that his own son had not been the bridegroom, Charles acidly remarked that if Lady Ogle were married to Mr. Thynne, then she had been betrayed by those who pretended to be, and ought to be, her best friends. The mystery of Lady Ogle's disappearance was cleared up the next day, when her chambermaid brought the grandmother a note written by her mistress the previous day, enclosing Thynne's ring and declaring that she could not endure him.[2]

Presently gossip connected Lady Ogle's name with that of Carl Johann Von Königsmarck, elder brother of Philip, afterwards the lover of Sophia Dorothea of Celle, wife of George I., who divorced and imprisoned her. This handsome German soldier of fortune, who, with his auburn hair worn long, seemed cut out for the rôle of lady-killer, had, it seems, been angling for the hand of Lady Ogle, probably the richest heiress in Europe, and, if rumour is to be believed, had not been discouraged by the young woman. Scenting danger, the grandmother hastened on the marriage with Thynne, who, as she argued in her cold, practical way, was a solid man of property and substance.

While the court and society generally were trying to make sense of the strange happenings, the Earl of Essex, married to Lady Ogle's aunt, was explaining to his dinner guest, John Evelyn, that his part in the affair had been sadly misrepresented. He had never thought Thynne a suitable match for one who might wed the best in the land, and personally recommended either Lord Kingston or Lord Cranborne. However, pressed by Monmouth, he had gone so far as to furnish old Lady Northumberland with particulars of the jointure which Thynne offered to settle on his bride. Lord Essex added that he shared the [common] view that the young woman had been betrayed by her grandmother and Major Brett [both], bribed for the part.

Not a whit perturbed by the commotion which her disappearance had created, Lady Ogle remained in Holland, paying not the slightest heed to

[1] *Rutland Papers.* [2] Buccleuch MSS., Vol. I.

her mother's advice to return to the protection of her lawful husband, if such he was. At the same time, she took such steps as were open to her to have the marriage declared null and void, producing evidence that at the time of the alleged ceremony, Thynne was already engaged to be married to a Miss Trevor.[1] Matters continued in this unsatisfactory state until February 12th, 1682, when towards dusk, Thynne, who had nothing to show for his lavish bribery, had occasion to be driving towards Haymarket. Nearing Pall Mall he was assailed by three foreign ruffians, all mounted, and shot dead on the spot. The miscreants were indicted at the Old Bailey, with them in the dock being Königsmarck, charged with being an accessory before the fact. Sir William Montague, Chief Baron of the Exchequer (Ralph Montagu's uncle), happened to be one of the presiding judges. The actual assassins were found guilty and hanged, but the Count, morally, if not legally, guilty of instigating the murder, was acquitted by the thoroughly corrupt jury.

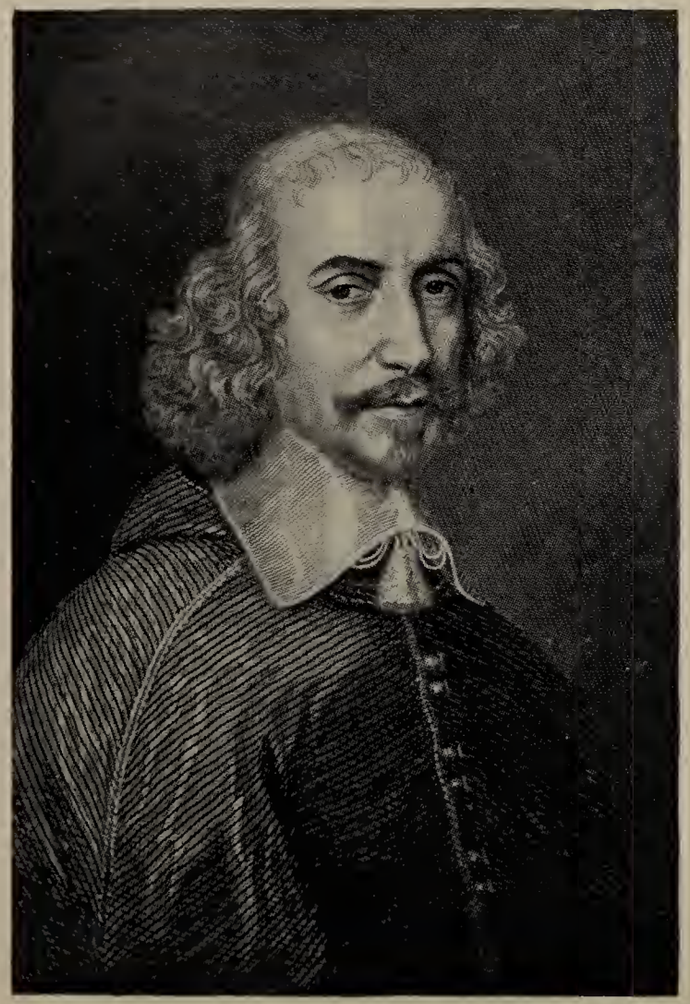
Before the year was out, Lady Ogle, twice widowed and still only fourteen, was wedded to the Duke of Somerset, who decided that, fine fellow as he was, he might do worse than marry her. In later years [in Lord Oxford's administration] the Duchess rose to be a power in the land, exercising as First Lady of the Bedchamber great influence over Queen Anne, who could not exist without a sympathetic confidant. Her earlier history was still remembered, and there were people, notably Swift in *The Windsor Prophecy*, 1711, unkind enough to suggest that, being madly in love with Königsmarck, she had connived at Thynne's assassination:

> And, dear Englond, if ought I understond,
> Beware of *Carrots*,[2] from Northumberlond ;
> Carrots sown Thynne a deep root may get,
> If so be they are in Somer set :
> Their *Conyngs mark* thou ;[3] for I have been told,
> They assassine when young, and poison when old.
>
> . . . . . .

What with his own exploits and what with those of his stepdaughter, Montagu could not complain of any lack of excitement. He seemed destined to figure prominently in the public eye, but the fact that the scandal-mongers found no new charmer to couple his name with rather suggested he had finished sowing his wild oats. The idea that he was the lover either of the Duchesse Mazarin or the seductive Mrs. Middleton (*bien faite, blonde et blanche*, to repeat Grammont), if once true was true no longer, and the purveyors of gossip, believing him to be as much a rake as ever, wondered who the new attraction could be. Forced by his political interests to see a host of dull people, of whom he stood in mortal dread, he was glad to escape to the genial society of that very lively creature, Lady Oxford, second wife of Aubrey de Vere, twentieth Earl, whose best known contribution to his country's history was the seduction of Mrs. Frances Davenport, celebrated

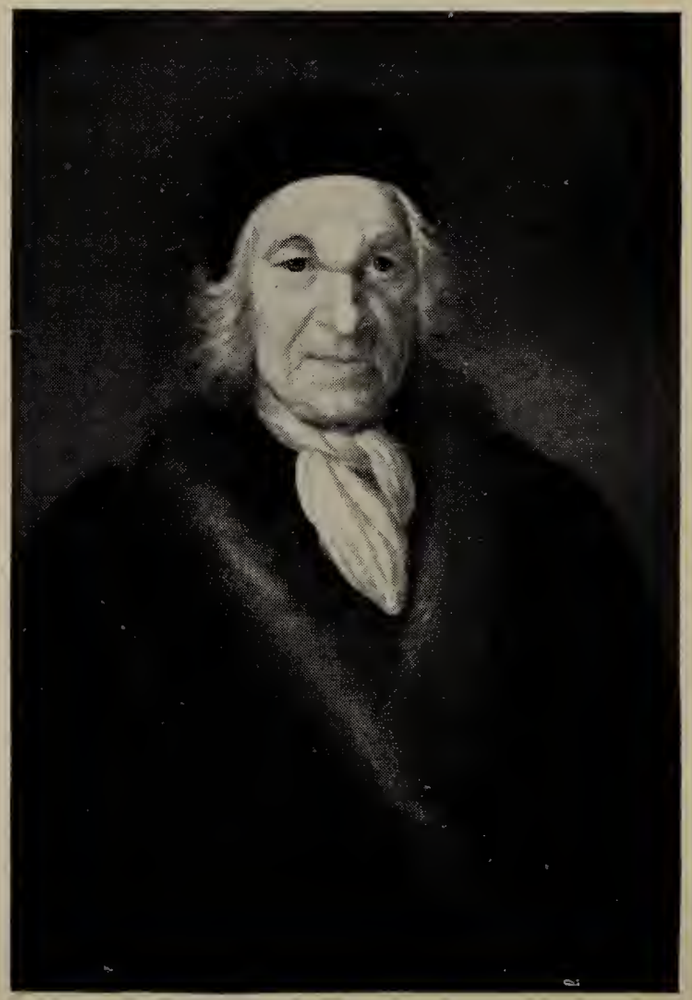
[1] Barrillon to Louis : *Aff. Etr. Angleterre*, tome CXLVI, fol. 343.
[2] The Duchess of Somerset had red hair.
[3] Count Königsmarck.

MRS. MIDDLETON
(After the portrait by Sir Peter Lely)



CARDINAL MAZARIN

JEAN DE LA FONTAINE



[*By permission of the National Portrait Gallery*

CHARLES DE SAINT ÉVREMOND

(After the portrait by J. Parmentier)

for her performance of Roxalana in D'Avenant's *Siege of Rhodes* in 1662 and Roxalana in Lord Orrery's *Mustapha* in 1665. Daughter of George Kirke, one of the Grooms of the Bedchamber to Charles I., she was the mother-in-law of Charles Beauclerk, Duke of St. Albans, the king's son by Nell Gwyn. While she may have shared the general morals of the ladies of the court, there is no reason to believe that she was more than a friend to Montagu, who, watched by the Sidneys, the Russells, the Shaftesburys, the Manners and the Percies, all in some degree related to him, had to be most careful how he behaved. Also, to sober him, he had the increased responsibility of a young family, whose liability to illness unceasingly caused him anxiety. All had inherited his wife's delicate constitution, and as his ambition centred on perpetuating a line of earls, marquises or even dukes, he was a prey to constant alarms.

His own health compelled him repeatedly to take the waters at Tunbridge Wells, which led the Dowager Countess of Sunderland, rather spitefully, to accuse him of selfishness, saying he was too occupied with his own ailments to trouble over his wife's.[1] It was a libel on his character. Lady Northumberland wanted the warmth and sunshine of the south of France, but as Montagu could not tear himself away from his political duties—he was very active at this period—she preferred to remain in England rather than go alone. Locke, who was to have been her guest in Paris in the autumn of 1680, was among those disappointed by this decision.[2]

Moreover, having just removed from their temporary abode, Leicester House, Leicester Square, rented from the Sidneys, into their palatial new home, Montagu House, with whose amenities they were highly delighted, husband and wife were not over-enthusiastic about leaving for a holiday abroad. Here Lady Northumberland enjoyed the satisfaction of being surrounded by relatives and friends. Her neighbours were Lord and Lady Russell at Southampton House; Lord and Lady Shaftesbury[3] were close by, and within easy range was the adoring aunt of the Montagu children—the arch-intriguer, Lady Harvey. So much of their time interchanging visits did they spend in each other's company, that they might be said to constitute one large family. The men, Montagu, Shaftesbury, Russell, sometimes joined by Monmouth (when that spoilt fellow could get away from his feminine bodyguard) talked politics, and elaborated their parliamentary strategy; the women, when they had retailed the current social gossip, amused themselves at ombre, basset and backgammon.

Apart from his active support of the Exclusion Bill and his encouragement of Monmouth's foolhardy ambitions, Montagu, as far as his nature would allow, played for safety, aware that if he made a slip, he had to expect no mercy from the king, who in such cases neither forgot nor forgave. Hence, when associating himself with Shaftesbury and Russell, he was careful to limit his commitments, refusing to be drawn into their violent schemes for constitutional changes, which he foresaw would end in disaster. The comments of Lady Sunderland are eloquent on this point: "July 1, 1680.

[1] *Sidney Diary.* [2] *Life of John Locke*, by H. R. Fox Bourne.

[3] Lady Margaret Spencer, third wife of Shaftesbury, was the sister-in-law of Lady Russell.

Mr. Montagu does not appear among the discontented in public. He is going to France . . . some of his company has grown too hot for him."—July 8th, "Mr. Montagu is not in any affair with them" [the leaders of the Opposition].

This was common prudence. Driven by his daemon, Shaftesbury was every day showing himself more reckless, his latest piece of folly being to arraign the Duke of York before the Grand Jury of Middlesex as a Popish recusant. Instead of using his boundless energy to set England on the right course, he was merely adding to the country's distractions, failing to realise that, in the inevitable reaction, if anyone benefited, it would be the king against whom all his weapons were directed.

A variety of reasons, all bearing on his safety, eventually precipitated Montagu's departure for France. Among these were the failure of the Exclusion movement, the accentuation of the king's hostility, revealed in refusal to ratify the choice in 1682 of old Lord Montagu as Recorder of Northampton, the flight of Shaftesbury to Holland (where he was to die), the execution of Lord Russell after conviction on the most dubious evidence, the demand of the Grand Jury of Northampton that Montagu and other exclusionists should give security for peace.

The outlook for Montagu, so far lucky enough to evade arrest, had gradually grown darker and more threatening, and he was well advised to put the Channel between him and his potential enemies.

Once in France his movements were closely watched by Lord Preston, the English Ambassador at Paris, who duly reported to Lord Halifax, Lord Privy Seal. Twice, he said, Montagu had sought to see Louis in private and twice he had been refused on the pretext that France's relations with Charles being so good and his own so bad, it would be unseemly on the French king's part to grant him an audience. Montagu then asked if he might not expect some money as a gratification, he having occasion for it. This request was also denied him. "It need not be observed to your Lordship," concluded the Ambassador, "that gratification presupposeth service."[1]

Dr. Burnet, who, to avoid being mixed up in the Monmouth conspiracy, had, with the king's permission, also betaken himself to France, appears to have had no difficulty in obtaining access to Louis, and Lord Preston was at some pains to explain the disparity in the treatment of the two men. The king possibly believed that Burnet might prove the more useful, but the scarcity of money accompanying the policy of retrenchment seemed the more feasible explanation of his reluctance to receive Montagu.[2]

While in Paris Montagu and Burnet saw a good deal of each other, and the historian confesses he found the talks most useful. "I got from him," said Burnet, "most of the secrets of the court and of the negotiations he was engaged upon." It is very doubtful, however, whether all of the information tendered was dependable, and it is certain that much of Burnet's curiosity Montagu refused to satisfy. For instance, he parried Burnet's question as to how the money from the French coffers in payment of his pension passed into the hands of Charles. Montagu professed not to know,

[1] 13th Report, Hist. MSS. Comm.
[2] *Dalrymple Memoirs.* Appendix.

but no one knew better than he what happened. The money, procured from the merchants on bills of exchange, was brought by agents of the French Ambassador to the lodgings of Will Chiffinch, preparatory to being handed over to Charles.

That Montagu and Burnet were on the friendliest terms was soon common talk in England. Dr. Crew, Bishop of Durham, anxious to retire on pension, profited by the news to the extent of calling on the ex-Ambassador to arrange for Burnet to take over the See, but the strong-willed divine was not interested. He preferred on Montagu's advice to pay a visit to Rome, taking with him Brigadier Stouppe, a Protestant officer in the French service.

While in France Montagu heard of the death of his father, which took place on January 10th, 1684, an event made all the more painful to him by the feeling that the old man should, if given his dues, have been an earl, like his kinsmen, Sandwich and Manchester.

If anything was calculated to deepen the new peer's bitterness towards the king it was this awareness of the unfair way Charles had treated his father, who, because of his detestation of the monarch's lewd conduct, had been consistently ignored whenever honours were being given out. While the most disreputable of court hangers-on had been exalted, the old gentleman, most deserving of men, had remained unrecognised, and in the last two or three years even humiliated, as in the matter of the Northampton Recordership. He had been made to suffer for the sins of his sons, both disgraced by the king, one on account of his queen and one because of his mistress—a strange coincidence.

None of the Montagues warranted more praise than the old master of Boughton, a fair-minded, if stern, parent, a God-fearing and upright gentleman, who liked the simple, honest ways of country folk and despised the meretricious smartness of the Whitehall habitués. Kindly to his tenants and servitors alike, he set an example which, happily for the country, was shared by many of his kind, Whitehall being no more England than Versailles was France.

. . . . . .

Lady Northumberland, who, out of regard for her husband and consistent with usage, now called herself Lady Montagu, was, naturally enough, more affected by the tragic end of her brother-in-law, Lord Russell[1], than that of her father-in-law, full of years, whom she had frequently thanked for the gift of a swan pie, a speciality of the Boughton menu.[2] It grieved her to see how heavily the burden of affliction rested on her half-sister, and while sensible of the inadequacy of mere words of condolence to assuage such deep sorrow, did her best to comfort Lady Russell. Lord Montagu, she remarked, would not hasten his return, having since the melancholy affair lost his taste for England. The date of the letter was March 7th, 1684, and Lady Montagu, who with her husband had been at Montpelier some time, drew an engaging picture of spring in that part of France. Fires had been

[1] Lord Russell was executed on July 21st, 1683.
[2] Buccleuch MSS., Vol. I.

dispensed with, save for one little vine faggot, morning and night, to air the linen. So hot was the sun that to go out driving before 4 p.m. was intolerable, and soon even that hour promised to be too early.

When she spoke of her husband having no wish to hurry back to England, she mistook his nature. He was not cut out for idling. Month after month he fairly itched to be back in the fray. Eventually, with characteristic audacity, he suggested to James, newly-arrived on the Throne, that they should bury the hatchet and work amicably together for the future, he, on his part, being prepared to serve him loyally and well. He did not write direct to James, but to the king's brother-in-law, Laurence Hyde, Earl of Rochester. "I intend," he wrote that ill-balanced statesman on April 4th, 1685, " to pay my attendance at His Majesty's coronation. I know not how unfortunate I may be as to lie under His Majesty's displeasure, but I know the generosity of his nature to be such that, as Louis, Duke of Orleans, when he came to the crown of France, said, 'it was not for a king of France to remember the grudges and quarrels of the Duke of Orleans'; so I hope His Majesty will be pleased to think the king is not to remember anything that has passed in relation to the Duke of York; for whatever my opinions were when I delivered them, being trusted by the public, they are altered now I am become his subject, knowing myself obliged by the laws of God and man to hazard life and fortune in the defence of his sacred person, crown and dignity.

" I hope my coming can give no offence, since it is out of no other end but to do my duty and submission, as it is fit for a subject to do, and to enjoy that protection and justice under His Majesty's government, which I am confident he will refuse no man who resolves to be as loyal and respectful to him in all things as I do. I beg of your Lordship, when the occasion offers, to afford me your good offices, which shall always be acknowledged as the greatest obligation in the world."[1]

Montagu's olive-branch was not disregarded, though James showed no particular hurry to respond, being doubtful, as well he might be, of the sincerity of his old enemy. When they did meet, however, it was, on the surface, a very cordial affair. Lord Clarendon, writing from Chapelizod on August 5th, 1686, to his brother Laurence, remarked that amongst the most entertaining of the news from England were reports of how extraordinarily well the king had received Montagu; so much so that the general opinion was that he would replace Lord Middleton as Secretary, though the latter did not appear either in disgrace or in process of advancement. If the news should be true, he would only say that miracles had not yet ceased.[2] But the news was not true, so there is no need to pursue the matter.

The year 1686 brought Montagu disaster. On January 18/19th his Bloomsbury palace, rented to the Earl of Devonshire for 500 guineas per year, and during the last week or so being got ready for his own return, was burnt down, owing to the seeming carelessness of the servants in charge. The weather being damp, the steward was airing the hangings by means of charcoal pans. Unfortunately, the old woman who was to remove the pans

[1] *Dalrymple Memoirs*. Appendix.
[2] *Clarendon Diary*, edited by Singer.

failed to do so, though allowing the steward to believe that all was safe and well,[1] and the place caught fire, which quickly spread. Lady Russell, awakened at 1 a.m. by the great noise in Russell Square occasioned by the blaze, tells us that the flames burnt so fiercely that by 5 a.m. the house was razed to the ground. "The wind blew strong this way so that we [in Southampton House] lay under fire a great part of the time, the sparks and flames covering the house and filling the court. My boy awoke and said he was almost suffocated with smoke, but being told the reason would see it, and so was satisfied without fear, and took a strange bedfellow very willingly, Lady Devonshire's youngest boy, whom his nurse had brought wrapped up in a blanket—thus we see what a day brings forth, and how momentary the things are we set our hearts upon."[2]

Montagu's loss, which included valuable plate, was estimated at £46,000. It would have been much greater had he not, during his absence, stored many of his valuables elsewhere. Lord Devonshire suffered almost as severely, losing choice pictures, hangings and furniture brought to Montagu House for, as he thought, greater safety. Montagu House had been designed in 1678 by Robert Hooke, Curator of the Royal Society, responsible for Bedlam and the Royal College of Physicians.[3] Evelyn spoke of it on November 5th, 1679, as "somewhat after the French . . . nobly furnished and fine, but [with] too much exposed garden." He visited it again on October 10th, 1683, and commended highly the ornamental work of the Neapolitan artist, Signor Verrio, who had previously been employed by the king to paint the ceilings of Windsor Castle.

Wasting no time in vain regrets, Montagu had the house rebuilt under the direction of Pierre Puget, an eminent sculptor, painter and architect. In Ackermann's *The Microcosm of London* it is stated that Louis, commiserating with the ex-Ambassador, who was in France at the time, defrayed the cost of employing three of the best French artists. Most probably he did no more than facilitate their use by Montagu. In the decoration of the walls and ceilings of the principal rooms, Charles de la Fosse was responsible for the historical and allegorical themes, including stories from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Jacques Rousseau for landscape subjects, and Jean Baptiste Monoyer (better known as Baptiste) for floral relief. The union of these discordant styles, says the same authority, produced a kind of garish splendour, which with the heavy carved and gilt furniture of that day must have largely savoured of cumbrous magnificence. Horace Walpole was more complimentary, observing that what was wanted in beauty was compensated for by the spacious and lofty magnificence of the apartments.

Modern taste would have approved of the extensive gardens at the rear, with wonderful views of the outlying areas stretching away to the northern heights, as yet unspoilt by the enterprising builder. West, one looked uninterruptedly towards Paddington, north as far as Primrose Hill, Hampstead and Highgate, east to the confines of Islington and St. Pancras. So

[1, 2] *Ellis's Letters*, 2nd Series, Vol. IV. According to Sir John Bramston's *Autobiography*, the old woman had been in Montagu's service for forty years.

[3] An admirable article on Robert Hooke appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*, January 5th, 1946.

open a stretch of country had naturally certain disadvantages, one of them being to make the fields immediately behind Montagu House the favourite rendezvous of duellists. A segment was familiarly known as "The field of forty footsteps", from the footprints made by two brothers unfortunate enough at the time of Monmouth's rebellion to fall in love with the same woman, and who elected to decide the issue with pistols or swords, she who was the cause of the fratricidal struggle watching from a nearby bank.[1]

According to John Aubrey, superstition drove young women anxious to be married to this spot: "The last summer on the day of St. John the Baptist (1694)," he writes, "I accidentally was walking on the pasture behind Montagu House; it was twelve o'clock. I saw there about two or three and twenty young women, most of them well habited, on their knees very busie, as if they had been weeding. I could not presently learn what the matter was. At last a young man told me, that they were looking for coal under the root of a plantain to put under their heads that night, and they should dream who would be their husbands. It was to be found that day and hour."

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Montagu, like Arlington, who was often to be seen smothering his grandchild with kisses, was fond of children. He idolised his offspring. Great, then, was the shock of losing his eldest-born, Ralph, aged eight, taken away from him on February 6th, 1687. For a time neither he nor his wife could bear the sight of the great house where the boy had died, and to escape the sad associations they took refuge with Lady Harvey, ever ready to minister to the needs of her adored brother. The other boy and girl, Winwood and Anne, were placed under the care of their aunt, Lady Russell, pending the renting of a house near Windsor where they could enjoy pure country air. In the end Montagu was persuaded to accept the hospitality at Ditton Park of his kindly kinsman, Richard Winwood, from whom in due course he would inherit the property. So nervous were the bereaved parents of the surviving boy, Winwood, repository of all their hopes and fears, catching cold or some other ailment, that on their return to Montagu House they would not permit him to venture farther than from one room to another. Telling us this in one of her piously-worded letters, Lady Russell concludes: "This is a fine lively child. I hope God will spare it to them to their comfort."

It was fortunate for the sorrowing father that, to distract his mind, he had the subterranean political intrigue to rid the country of James and substitute in his place the Protestant champion, William of Orange. But the mother, who was not in the least interested in politics, remained attached to her sad memories, which largely undid the benefit her health had derived from the various treatments and changes of air.

Active as Montagu undoubtedly was in the revolutionary conspiracy, he played a much less important part in the overthrow of the misguided king than his old enemy, Danby (released early in the reign), who seized York on

[1] *London, Past and Present*, by Wheatley and Cunningham.

behalf of William.[1] However, in the virulence of his references to the fallen monarch, Montagu took second place to none. On the question arising whether the Prince and Princess of Orange should be declared king and queen, he said he was perfectly satisfied that the Throne was vacant, and pronounced himself absolved of all allegiance to James.[2] The latter, it should be explained, had earned his hatred by stripping him of his office of Master of the Great Wardrobe, for which he had paid out so much hard cash.

There was something to be said for his behaviour, seeing that he and James had never really been reconciled, but what could not be apologised for, or extenuated, was the conduct of "the knave Sunderland", to quote Ailesbury. Asked how it was possible for a person of his great parts and experience to have given his master, King James, such pernicious councils in the execution of which he had incurred all his misfortunes, this corrupt statesman replied with a sneer that, but for those counsels, the Prince of Orange would never have landed and succeeded in his mission.[3] Montagu may have been a scoundrel, but he could scarcely be said to be a cad as well.

Unlike Buckingham, the refined epicure, neither Montagu nor Danby took up politics for amusement. As they viewed things, patriotism was misspent energy unless accompanied by handsome dividends. Happily for them, William, whose vicissitudinous career had made him a cynical realist, fully appreciated this important fact, and was therefore more than willing adequately to remunerate them for their services on his behalf. That fateful year, 1689, Montagu was created an Earl, a distinction which had long evaded him, or rather his more deserving father, while Danby was elevated to the Marquisate, and in addition appointed Lord President of the Council, which office, though he had hoped to be once again Lord Treasurer, he converted in the course of a twelvemonth into the equivalent of the Premiership.

According to Dr. Maty, biographer of the great Lord Chesterfield, the new Earl and Marquis became reconciled to each other. All sorts of strange combinations took place in the seventeenth century, but it is difficult to believe, after what had happened, that Montagu and Danby could ever bring themselves to resume even outwardly friendly relations. But Maty is quite explicit on the point: "Danby and Montagu, inveterate enemies under Charles II., whose schemes they had by turns encouraged and defeated, were now safely arrived in port. Free from those tumultuous passions which had so long kept them at variance, they daily met, like friends, at the house of Lady Halifax, as the elder African's brother and old Cato may be supposed to have done at the house of the mother of the Gracchi. Under their eyes the young eagle [Lord Chesterfield, grandson of Lady Halifax, born in 1694] was made to try his wings in order one day to soar above their reach."

If, indeed, the two men sufficiently thawed to be on speaking terms, the new relationship cannot have had much substance. As we know, no sooner

[1] Montagu was one of the twenty-nine Peers who, on December 11th, 1688, day of James's flight, met in conclave at the Guildhall, and assumed the functions of the Government. The following day he moved that the unspeakable Titus Oates should be released from prison, but it was left to the Commons, among whom the infamous wretch had many friends, not only to ensure his release, but to reward his disgraceful services by a pension of £300 a year. [2] *Clarendon Diary.* [3] *Ailesbury Memoirs.*

had Montagu passed to his rest than Danby, doing away with all pretence of forgiveness, proceeded to damn him right and left. The vilification would not have disturbed Montagu in the shades, for in the event of his dying first he must have expected this to happen.

Almost as gratifying to Montagu as his earldom and the Privy Councillorship which went with it, was the return on June 28th, 1690, of the Mastership of the Great Wardrobe, for which he held the life patent. Lord Preston,[1] to whom James on his accession had quite illegally transferred the office, refused to yield it up unless forced by law. He lost the suit, but Montagu, not wishing to be too hard on the fervent Jacobite, defrayed all the legal expenses and allowed him to retain such sums as he had already drawn from the office. That Montagu loved money simply for the pleasures it could purchase seems borne out by the fact that he agreed to draw only a portion of the salary attached to the office.[2]

Some months previously (March 29th, 1690), Montagu's heart had been gladdened by the birth of a third son, whom he called John after John de Montagu, son of the feudal 1st Earl of Salisbury, his fictitious ancestor; but when the child, the future 2nd Duke of Montagu, was only six months old, he was destined to lose the care of his mother, who never properly got over her confinement. Montagu, in his curious fashion, loved his wife, appreciating her loyalty which never wavered, no matter how discreditable his conduct appeared to be. Few women with her resources and powerful friends would have remained with him after the Castlemaine-Sussex scandal, and for this he had to thank her religious nature, proclaiming it a wife's duty to stick to her husband through thick and thin. The Restoration period is to be judged not only by such women as Lady Shrewsbury and Lady Castlemaine, but also by such chaste and devoted wives as Lady Montagu and her half-sister, Lady Russell.

. . . . . .

When his wife had been dead rather more than a year, and without disrespect to her memory he could resume entertaining, Montagu acted as dinner host to the king, who drove informally to Montagu House in Sidney's coach. It was a brilliant affair, both in respect to the splendour of the display and the representative character of the guests, who included the best-born and most politically important in the land. All the signs were that the new Earl was well set for further greatness, but what he had in mind he wisely kept to himself. His heart was fixed on a dukedom, and to achieve that end he proposed to marry the greatest fortune in the land. His friends suspected that he was contemplating a second marriage, but never did they imagine that in fulfilment of his ambition he would stoop to a lunatic. But such, indeed, proved to be the case. To the astonishment of society at large, it was announced that on September 8th, 1692, he had wedded the enormously wealthy widowed Duchess of Albemarle, lately still

[1] Lord Preston, a high Tory, to whom earlier reference has been made, had in 1688 succeeded Sunderland as Secretary of State. The same year as he lost the lawsuit he was tried and condemned at the Old Bailey for attempting to restore James by means of French aid, but was pardoned in 1691.

[2] *Court and Society from Elizabeth to Anne* by the Duke of Manchester.

further enriched under the will of her indulgent father, the late 2nd Duke of Newcastle. By her crazy antics she had driven her first husband to the bottle, but Montagu, a far stronger character, deemed himself well able to cope with her tantrums. What made the union still more remarkable was the complicated relationship it established, the Duchess being sister of Lord Ogle, first of the three husbands of Montagu's stepdaughter, Lady Betty Percy, now Duchess of Somerset. In other words, he had married the sister-in-law of his stepdaughter, a small matter which would not have worried a man of Montagu's spacious philosophy.

Since being widowed the Duchess had remained in charge of two sisters, Mary and Sarah Wright, with two physicians, one almost blind, in fairly constant attendance. Montagu, an expert in bribery, as he proved when Ambassador in Paris, managed not only to overcome all obstacles to seeing the demented lady, but even to courting her with a view to marriage. That required considerable address and art, since the Duchess, whom vanity had driven off her head, was only prepared to wed a monarch. Accordingly, with the obvious connivance of the bought attendants, Montagu, his stocky frame and swarthy features suitably decked out to agree with the rôle, represented himself as the Emperor of China and won the Duchess's consent to become his Empress.

When brought before the Judges in Chancery, who had occasion to question them, the sisters Wright, obvious parties to the ignoble masquerade or swindle, gave such contradictory answers as to suggest that they were as harebrained as their mistress. Certainly they seem to have been unable to offer any more resistance to Montagu's blandishments than the French nun who, fourteen years earlier, had handed over to him Lady Castlemaine's letters addressed to Châtillon. So thoroughly did he impose on the demented woman that, to the end of her days, she believed she was the Empress of China, the attendants who looked after her being trained to serve her on the knee.

It might be thought that aristocratic society would shrink from a man guilty of such practices. No such thing happened. If anything, Montagu was more sought after than ever, his wealth and the lavish nature of his entertainments being the things to count with his wide circle of friends, who took an amused, rather cynical view of the transaction. His own prevailing sentiment was one of exhilaration rather than shame, inasmuch as he had outwitted several other equally unscrupulous schemers bent on capturing the same rich but revolting prize. They included the careerist, Henry Savile, brother of *The Trimmer*, who usually looked to the Duchess of Cleveland for help in his worldly ambitions, and Richard, Lord Roos, who in his vexation had the following fling at his successful rival:

Insulting rival never boast
  Thy conquest lately won,
No wonder that her heart was lost—
  Her senses first were gone.

For one that's under Bedlam's laws
  What glory can be had ?
For love of thee was not the cause :
  It proves that she was mad.

Had Lord Roos been as clever at wooing as rhyming, he might in the matter of this marriage have changed places with Montagu, who had not troubled about versifying since his schoolboy days, when he composed an elegiac poem to the memory of Lord Henry, eldest son of Ferdinando, 6th Earl of Huntingdon. "How came Montagu to gain the widow from Savile?" was one of the questions asked in the Queries and Answers from Garraway's Coffee-House poems, published in the collection of State Poems of the Seventeenth Century. The answer, "The one was witty in going to bed; the other wise in cutting the bellrope," seems to indicate that Montagu was adroit in winning a wife, Savile adroit in retaining his bachelor state.

That there should be suitors of such prominence for the hand of the Duchess is clear proof of the extent to which members of the ruling class made money their god. It could not be pretended that there was the slightest uncertainty as to the unfortunate lady's mental affliction. The father, the Duke of Newcastle, had been forced to admit that his daughter was utterly incapable of managing her large estates, while the mother, not to beat about the bush, fairly described her as quite crazy. Three years before the Montagu marriage, the Duke, confiding in Sir John Reresby, mentioned that his daughter had concealed a love-letter from some unnamed suitor, and that on being challenged by her husband, the Duke of Albemarle, pretended to be distracted. Even as he spoke the poor, worried father must have known that he was deliberately deceiving himself, since there was not the slightest pretence about his daughter's madness. In that same year, commenting on a visit which she had paid him, he pathetically remarked: "I saw when my daughter Albemarle was here, she was not mad, but there was a great consternation upon her, I suppose caused by her own folly and pride, and the malice of others."

Though only thirty-eight, with some vestiges of undoubted beauty still remaining, the Duchess can have had no other appeal to Montagu than that of being an easy source of enrichment. Using her large income he could afford to finance the elaborate decorative scheme which he had planned for Boughton, his beautiful Northamptonshire house. Indeed, as soon as they were married, he made it clear that their relationship was not to be that of man and wife, but of gaoler and captive, reversing the rôle of another Montagu, the 3rd Earl of Sandwich, who was to be captive and his wife gaoler.[1] Rooms in Montagu House were set apart for her special use, and here, humoured in every fantastic whim, that is, served with the pomp and ceremonious ritual befitting the Empress of China, she passed her life. Beyond her special attendants, and, of course, Montagu himself, no one was allowed to go near her. Even her close relatives, on some excuse or another, were denied access to the Duchess.

So thorough was the process of seclusion that Montagu was unable to prevent the spread of the rumour that she was dead, and that he was concealing the fact in order to enjoy her £8,000 a year, which on her demise reverted to Lord Bath. Accordingly, the relatives obtained an Act of Parliament obliging Montagu to produce his wife before several persons of trust.

[1] See Chapter IX, *The Fascinating "Gaoler."*

Anticipating such a move, Montagu had already brought his wife for inspection to Mme. d'Auverquerque, aunt of Lord Bath, but as this good lady had never known the Duchess and could in consequence have been easily imposed upon, the interested parties, as well as the public, continued to credit the report that she was dead; hence the order for her production.[1]

If Montagu's conduct in marrying the Duchess was despicable, then the behaviour of Lord Thanet,[2] her brother-in-law, not only in condoning the marriage, but in congratulating the bridegroom, can only be described as contemptible. The marriage, he wrote Montagu, was not more surprising than pleasing to him, since he was certain it would on all accounts be extremely satisfactory to the lady Duchess and to all her relatives, whose only wish was for her prosperity. Either Lord Thanet was too saturated with the heartless cynicism of his class to take a right-minded view of the affair or, like his sister-in-law, he, too, was more than a little touched.

Apt and topical themes being hard to come by, it was not to be expected that the playwriting fraternity would overlook Montagu's incomparable gift to comedy. Sure enough, they fastened with alacrity upon his fantastic courtship, with results that greatly diverted theatrical audiences, quick to recognise the source of inspiration. Colley Cibber turned the masquerade to particular account in his play *The Double Gallant or Sick Lady's Cure*, while Burnaby, in his play *The Lady's Visiting Day*, pictured his hero Courtine, a gallant lover, as wooing in the guise of a Prince of Muscovy the Lady Lovetoy, who will wed none but a prince.

To be pilloried by dramatists and coffee-house wits caused Montagu not the slightest embarrassment. He was content to let his enemies and detractors sneer, while he occupied himself with the business of furthering his ambitions. From a monetary point of view his massive gains exceeded expectation. His problem now was to match his rank in the peerage with his augmented wealth. By his marriage with a duchess, he calculated that the dukedom, on which he had set his heart, had been brought so much nearer, and he proposed to badger the already unduly harassed king until the promotion was conceded him. His attitude to William was much the same as his attitude to Charles had been—friendship founded on reciprocal benefits. Like Bolingbroke, some time his contemporary, he subordinated his political principles to his success.

Whenever Montagu desired any favour, he always managed to persuade himself that it was his lawful due. Thus in petitioning for his dukedom, he was confident his demands would be thought reasonable, considering how much the king was obligated to him for his Crown, a debt only partially redeemed by the earldom, which in any case was long overdue. His letter, dated May 18th, 1694, which most people would consider an astonishing piece of effrontery, was really nothing more than a typical example of his style when appealing for further aggrandisement. The Earl of Bedford had been made a duke; it was only right he should be similarly distinguished. The honour would have been solicited for him by the old Duke of Schomberg,

[1] *Wentworth Papers.*

[2] Lord Thanet was one of the twenty-nine peers who, meeting at the Guildhall assumed the functions of the Government. (See earlier in the chapter.)

who was also in his debt, but he deemed it unseasonable to press his claims while Shrewsbury still remained an earl. Now that Shrewsbury had been made a duke, he felt free to aspire to the same dignity, to which he had as much right as any of the families that had been promoted. He was head of a family which many years back had great honours and dignities, when he was sure these had none: "we having lost them by the civil wars between York and Lancaster. I am now below the two younger branches—Manchester and Sandwich.

"I have to add to my pretensions," he went on, "the having married the Duke of Newcastle's eldest daughter, and it has been the practice of all your predecessors, whenever they were so gracious to keep up the honour of a family by the female line, to bestow it upon those who married the eldest, without there are some personal prejudice to the person who held that claim. I may add, Sir, another pretension, which is the same for which you have given a Dukedom to the Bedford family, the having been one of the first; and held out to the last, in that cause which, for the happiness of England, brought you the Crown.

"I hope it will not be thought a less merit to be alive and ready on all occasions to venture all again for your service, than if I had lost my head when Lord Russell did. I could not then have had the opportunity of doing the nation the service I did, when there was such opposition made by the Jacobite party, in bringing my Lord Huntingdon, the Bishop of Durham and my Lord Ashley to vote against the regency, and for your having the Crown, which was carried but by those three voices and my own. I should not put you in mind of this, but hoping that so fortunate and so reasonable a service as this may supply all my other wants of merit; and which, since you were pleased to promise me in your bedchamber at St. James's before you were king, never to forget, you will not now that are so great and gracious a one. The Duke of Shrewsbury can further satisfy you what persecution I suffered, and what losses I sustained in the last two reigns which must make the mortification greater if my humble suit be refused."[1]

Few of the assertions made by Montagu in his self-adulatory letter bore any relation to the truth. His suit, so far from being humble, was presumptuous. The claim to be descended from the feudal Montagues, who were Earls of Salisbury, was quite unfounded. As already shown, the patriarch of his line was the worthy yeoman, Richard Ladde, who later took the name of Montagu. John de Montagu, son of the 1st Earl of Salisbury, married Margaret, daughter and heiress of Lord Monthermer, which explains, though it does not justify, Ralph Montagu's assumption of the title of Viscount Monthermer. Equally false was the claim that he had been a party to the conspiracy which cost Lord Russell his head. Actually he had taken particular care to dissociate himself from the rash plans and counsels of the leaders of the Opposition. Finally, the assertion that, from first to last, he had been for King William was flatly contradicted by his intrigues with Louis, the purpose of which was to augment the French king's power at the expense of the Dutch, and by his fulsome professions of loyalty to James when seeking safe re-entry into England.

[1] *Dalrymple Memoirs.* Appendix, Bk. VI, pp. 256–8.

King William must have read Montagu's letter with very mixed feelings —disgust at the sheer audacity of this unprincipled and unscrupulous self-seeker, and amusement at his complaisant tone, obviously reflecting the belief that his dealings with Louis were unknown to the Dutch court. Montagu would have been less pressing and certainly less confident, had he been aware that His Majesty, well served by spies, one of whom was M. Blancard, secretary to the elder Ruvigny, was fully cognisant of the extent to which he had been in the pay of France. But veiling his real sentiments with exquisite expressions of regret, William said "No" to the request, though Shrewsbury, as he had promised Montagu, wrote supporting the application.

His letter, which is to be found in Coxe's *Shrewsbury Correspondence*, is a veritable work of art, deserving of the most careful study. While vindicating the promise to back up Montagu's pretensions, it cunningly damns him with faint praise. "There is no question," he remarked, "but [that] family and his estate make him fit to receive any honour your Majesty may think proper to confer upon anybody, and I must own I have ever lived so kindly with him and wish him personally so well, that I should be glad of any mark of favour your Majesty should be pleased to show him; but much doubting whether at a time you seem to have closed your intentions of promotions of this kind, you will be disposed to grant such a favour . . . I think it may not, on the other side, be improper to give a doubtful answer, till such a time as your Majesty shall return (from the Continent). You will then be best able to judge how far it may fit to oblige a man who is certainly very able, and, I believe, may be very willing to serve you."

Neither William nor Mary trusted Montagu, as may be gathered from a typical episode. When William was in Ireland and Mary supposed to be keeping a watchful eye on events this side of St. George's Channel, Lord Marlborough brought her a message from Montagu, offering with other peers to raise 1,200 men for her service, provided they were later reimbursed for their expenditure. Suspicious of the offer, the queen gracefully declined, attributing her reluctance to accept to the ambiguity of Montagu's character. Reporting to the king, she said that when she told Marlborough of her dislike for Montagu, he conceded him to be one of those he believed His Majesty would mistrust. Little did he dream in those days that a daughter of his would marry the son and heir of the man of whom he had such a poor opinion.

Even had William felt better disposed towards Montagu, he would not have varied his refusal, having come to the conclusion that the award of honours was being sadly overdone. Everybody who fancied he had rendered the king the slightest service applied for a reward. Lord Halifax *The Trimmer*, commenting on the deluge of applications, dryly remarked, "I remember to have read in history that Rome was saved by geese, but I do not remember that these geese were made Consuls!"

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While struggling for his dukedom, Montagu was involved in the costly, complicated and protracted litigation arising out of the two wills made by

his wife's first husband, the 2nd Duke of Albemarle, the one dated 1675 favouring the Earl of Bath (Sir John Grenville, first cousin, through his mother, of the great Monk, 1st Duke of Albemarle) and the other dated 1687, which added nothing to the substantial portion of the Duchess—£8,000 a year—favouring Col. Thomas Monk, supposed elder [illegitimate] brother of the ducal testator. Whereas in the first will the bulk of the estates was left to the Earl of Bath, in the second this handsome provision went to the Monks. Charges of bribery and corruption of witnesses were freely exchanged, and in several instances terms of imprisonment on witnesses guilty of perjury were inflicted. There was a phase of the litigation when the Earl of Bath, according to Evelyn, was cast in forgery. Every known form of obstruction, including privilege of Parliament, was employed by the noble parties to the suit. This not only delayed the progress of the case, but interfered with the claim of the Monk cousins, notably Elizabeth Pride, married to William Sherwin, the first Englishman to produce mezzotints in this country. Her name must have been familiar to Montagu, for it was the intercession of his father which secured for Betty Pride a dowry of £500 from her rich cousin, Christopher, 2nd Duke of Albemarle. On their behalf it was pleaded that the use of privilege by the two Earls prevented them from maintaining their cause. Judgment was given in their favour, both Montagu and Bath being ordered to waive their privilege "as to all persons who pretend to any title to the estates".

The wheels of the law slowly rumbled along to the accompaniment of sudden and mysterious deaths and even suicide, all directly attributable to the vexations, strains and stresses of the interminable lawsuit. As it looked like going on for ever, swallowing up in expenses a great part of the disputed estate, the two Earls sought to buy out the Monk claimants, but owing to disagreement amongst those concerned, they achieved only a limited success. When Montagu and Bath, having spent between them £20,000 on legal costs, came to settle their own differences, they quickly agreed on terms. In return for adequate compensation incorporated in a deed dated October 1st, 1698, the Earl of Bath relinquished all right to the estates left to the Duchess during her life.

However, little time was given Lord Bath to enjoy any peace. In 1700, notice of ejectment was served upon him by Sherwin in respect to Finchley Park, Northampton, part of the Albemarle estate he had inherited, and to protect himself he had to secure an order from the Court. On August 22nd, 1702, worn out by his exertions, he died.

Meanwhile, Sir Walter Clarges, cousin and executor to the testator, was still engaged in defending Anne Clarges and George Monk, 1st Duke of Albemarle, against the grievous charge that they were never legally married, since the woman's first husband, Thomas Radford, a London milliner, was then alive; indeed still lived. This attempt to turn what was a romantic attachment into a sordid conspiracy eventually failed. The non-controversial facts were simple enough. Born a farrier's daughter, Anne Clarges, a sempstress, who had assisted her husband, Thomas Radford, in his London business, had made the acquaintance of the future 1st Duke of Albemarle when he was Fairfax's prisoner in the Tower. It was a case of

love at first sight, and they were eventually married, Anne Clarges describing herself as a widow. As nothing more was seen or heard of Radford, her story was obviously true. The Monk claimants, who asserted that he was still alive, might have been more convincing had they produced him in the flesh.

The insinuation was a serious matter for Montagu's wife, since, if it was true, it bastardised her first husband, Christopher, 2nd Duke of Albemarle, and challenged the disposal of the Albemarle fortune, including the Duchess's £8,000 a year. The Monk claimants stuck to their yarn, and as late as April 12th, 1703, Sir Walter Clarges, writing to the Duke of Newcastle, warned him that the accusation had not yet been disposed of: "I am to have another trial with Sherwin upon that scandalous attempt of bastardising the last Duke of Albemarle, to try whether Christopher, the late Duke, or Mr. Sherwin is right heir to Duke George, and whether the present Duchess [Montagu's wife] if she be living, was and is Duchess of Albemarle, or only my Lady Elizabeth Radford. This scandalous cause they have four times brought on already and as often miscarried in such, their vile pretensions. I am sure all sober men that I converse withal think it [a] reproach to Westminster Hall, and a scandal to common justice that the memory of people so long after their deaths, and of persons of such consideration, should undergo such barbarous reflections, when nothing like it was ever brought in question during the course of their whole lives."[1]

Whatever line of attack Montagu, championing his rich wife's interests, had to meet, he managed to acquit himself so well that the wealth she derived from her first husband was not materially affected, a distinct achievement in view of the determined onslaught, first, on the part of the Earl of Bath, fortified by the earlier will which seemed to reflect the real intentions of the testator, and second, on the part of the obstinate cousins, whose pugnacity had a great nuisance value. But quite apart from what came to her under the will, the new Duchess was rich in her own right, having on her first marriage received a dowry of £20,000 from her father and a substantial settlement from the pleased 1st Duke of Albemarle, while the jewellery bestowed on her by her doting first husband was, in itself, worth a considerable fortune.

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Pretending not to be hurt by William's refusal of his dukedom, Montagu continued his cordial manner towards the monarch, and in the autumn of 1695 acted as his host at Boughton, the entertainments being on the scale of magnificence which only a man of his wealth could afford. The king was

[1] Portland MSS., Vol. II. The litigation over the Albemarle estates is referred to in many contemporary writings: *Evelyn's Memoirs*, *Narcissus Luttrel's Diary*, House of Lords MSS., Hist. Comm. R., 1695–97; 1699–1702; Timberland's *Hist. & Proc. H. of Lords*, Vol. I: "The case of the heirs-at-law to George Monck, late Duke of Albemarle," 1709. A succinct summary is to be found in *The House of Lords in the Reign of William III*, by A. S. Turberville, and a fuller and more satisfactory account in *Christopher Monck, Duke of Albemarle*, by E. F. Ward. In *Salkeld's Reports*, 1688–1712, Vol. I, appears a report of the arguments for and against the assertion that the 2nd Duke of Albemarle was a bastard.

greatly interested in Montagu's improvements, especially those to be found in the grounds of the mansion, over 100 acres in extent, where, taking his ideas from Versailles, he had installed handsome fountains challenging in beauty, if not in immensity, those in the gardens of Louis's draughty palace. After many disturbing failures, they had at last been got to work efficiently. Marlborough had enthusiastically praised them, and William felt he had not exaggerated their charm. Replying to Marlborough, whose compliments he greatly appreciated, Montagu had wittily written, "Good as my *water*works may be, they are not to be compared with your Grace's *fire*works."

Had he lived to see his intentions regarding Boughton fully carried out, great would have been his borrowings from Versailles. The west front, which looks down the broad avenue, was planned to correspond with the noble north front, which in its design was more suggestive of the luxurious stables than of the palace of Versailles. The ceilings decorated with nude mythological deities by Antonio Verrio flattered the taste of the day, the most remarkable being *The Healing of the Sick*, where the spectators were depicted in long periwigs, with recognisable likenesses of himself (Verrio), Sir Godfrey Kneller, Mr. May, one of the officials at Windsor, Mrs. Marriott, housekeeper at Windsor, depicted as one of the Furies, while Satan's nose was uncommonly like that of the king's, the artist having been greatly irritated by the monarch's stinginess.

The gardens at Boughton, replete with lovely vistas, must have greatly appealed to William, wondering whether even his host's vast resources would be adequate for all the improvements he still had in mind. Actually it was a piece of good fortune for Montagu's son that his father died before all the plans he had drawn up were put into effect; otherwise he must have left a sadly diminished estate, such inroads did the expenditure make on his fortune. The king was delighted with his visit, but he confined his appreciation to a warmly-worded letter of thanks. Nothing was said about the dukedom, or any office in the government likely to appeal to so ambitious a man. However, to assuage his disappointment, Montagu had the news that his former enemy, Danby, if now a duke, had been dropped from his position as Lord President of the Council, having failed to check his itch for bribes, this time a *douceur* from the East India Company for supporting the renewal of their charter. The amount, 5,000 guineas, was small for a person of his large ideas, but he could not bring himself to refuse. It is asserted that the reason why the threatened prosecution was not persisted in was the pocketing by the king of a similar present.[1]

When judging between Danby and Montagu, it should not be overlooked that the former, if in many respects more worthy, had, starting from nothing, grown inordinately rich by methods which would not bear investigation. In January, 1676, just before Montagu began his second Ambassadorship, the Privy Council, investigating a gross case of corruption, were told by a witness how an attempt to bribe the then Lord Treasurer had failed. That led Lord Halifax *The Trimmer* cynically to remark that the Lord Treasurer appeared to have rejected the offer very mildly, and not so as to discourage

[1] *The Complete Peerage.*

a second attempt. It was as if a man should ask for his neighbour's wife and meet a cool refusal.[1]

To witness an enemy's reverse is, at the best, a transient satisfaction, and Montagu found he was more concerned with his own failure to rise than with what happened to his old enemy. Nor was his sense of frustration any the less deepened by the spectacle of the advance to power of his brilliant cousin, Charles Montague, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had reformed the coinage, modernised the system of national credit, and in emulation of his own example married a rich widow. Fortunately the variety of his interests made it impossible for him to remain piqued long. Mentally shrugging his shoulders, he reconciled himself to the policy of waiting a more favourable turn of events. His door was always open to the society of cultured men, French as well as English, with whom he loved to exchange Latin and Greek tags. Those best able to act as foils to his witty discourse were his special favourites, for which reason he was particularly partial to Saint Evremond, the genial philosopher, whose prime joy in life was to participate in witty and enlightened conversation, and to Congreve, the playwright, who had an amusing turn of phrase. Both men found Montagu not only an admirable host, but the most entertaining of company. None of their acquaintances had at his command such a repertory of diverting and piquant anecdotage, or required less encouragement to share his intellectual spoils. Of him could be said, with almost equal truth, what Hazlitt said of Coleridge: "He talked on for ever, and you wished him to talk on for ever."

Congreve, after paying a visit to Montagu at Boughton in the summer of 1699, wrote his last comedy, *The Way of the World*, which he dedicated to his host, saying that if in any part of the play he had gained a turn of style or expression more correct than formerly, he must ascribe it to participating in the conversation of his lordship and his friends, since it was immediately after the visit to him that the comedy was written. Allowing for the exaggerated note pervading most dedications, the remark can still be considered a fitting tribute to Montagu's excellence as a conversationalist.

Shrewsbury, suffering from the universal malady of the age, boredom, had learnt from experience that the quickest and surest means of being restored to cheerfulness was to spend a week with the master of Boughton. A more frequent visitor was the suave Earl of Galway, son of the venerable Marquis de Ruvigny, from whom Montagu alleged he had obtained many French Court secrets. Cousin of Montagu's first wife, and therefore a distant relative, he earned his right of entry into the gay and select Boughton company by liberally contributing to the feast of reason. He had unqualified praise for all that Montagu said or did. In his opinion the cascade at Boughton was the most perfect of its kind, and much to be preferred to the larger examples at Versailles and Chantilly.

[1] Burnet. Danby deserves praise, if for nothing else, for seeing that the beautiful statue of Charles I., which now stands at the Strand end of Whitehall, was re-erected in April, 1678, after being hidden away to save it from destruction by the Cromwellians. It was cast by Le Sueur for the Earl of Arundel in 1637. On the outbreak of Civil War Parliament ordered it to be sold and broken to pieces, but the purchaser, John Rivett, a brazier living near the Dial, Holborn Viaduct, realizing its artistic value, buried it instead. When re-erected by Danby's order, the statue was placed on its present pedestal, the work of the great Grinling Gibbons.

Few were the gatherings under Montagu's roof that were not graced by the presence of Dr. Pierre Sylvestre, a native of Holland, who through his host's influence had been appointed physician to William III. To him had been entrusted the care of Montagu's son John [on the death of Winwood, in 1702, he became his father's heir], whom presently he would accompany on a Continental tour to broaden his mind and strengthen him physically. The youth could hardly have wished for a better tutor, Sylvestre, as clearly revealed by his letters to Saint Evremond, being a lively and amusing fellow. Of the other *protégés* of Montagu to enjoy his hospitality, the most notable was the historian Michel Le Vassor, who fleeing from religious persecution in France had been granted a Northampton benefice. He is best known for his history of Louis XIII., twenty volumes in all, which would profit greatly by an index. In his public writings he paid tribute to Montagu for many kindnesses.

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Saint Evremond, speaking of the fare provided at Boughton, used the eloquent phrase "delicious abundance". Judging by what came to the table, the owners of these fine country establishments were great trenchermen, who would have been appalled by the lean diet of their descendants in the year of grace, 1947. Included in the menu were great barons of beef, game pies, swan pies, giblet pasties, peaches and truffles, heathcocks, oysters, salmon, as well as carp from Newhall, the Essex residence of the mad Duchess. The wine was the finest to be had, Montagu being particularly proud of his choice brands.

Pale, decrepit, untidy Saint Evremond, whose eighty and more years were fast telling on him, felt his mouth water as he read Dr. Sylvestre's description of the meals at Boughton, which, but for the fatigue of the long journey to Northampton, he might once again be sharing. "I lose a thousand pleasures which are all to my taste," was his bitter lament in the year 1701. "That of seeing the fine house [Boughton], the fine waterworks, the fine ducks, would have pleased me extremely, although I be but an indifferent inspector. But you will easily guess the greatest of all, and that is being with my Lord Montagu, to enjoy his conversation twice a day, before and after the best cheer in the world."

Montagu entertained just as lavishly in London, and punctually every Sunday and Wednesday, Saint Evremond, bearing all the signs of neglect—he thought his soul's delight, the Duchesse Mazarin, crazy for being so fastidiously clean—would present himself for the rare refreshment, physical and mental, that he knew he could safely count upon. With his great wen clamped between his eyebrows like a heavy poultice, with his badly-worn, much-stained clothing hanging clumsily on his age-ridden limbs, and his skull-cap perched anyhow on his tousled, snow-white locks, the philosopher seemed scarcely the kind of person to patronise this favoured rendezvous of the rich and the powerful. Yet to Montagu, proud of the vein of sentimentality which underlay and often challenged the protective skin of cynicism, no sight was more welcome than that of the octogenarian Frenchman dragging his thin, feeble legs up the stone stairway of the great mansion.

For was he not promised hours of delightful reminiscence, woven of piquant stories of such enchantresses as Ninon de l'Enclos and the Duchesse Mazarin, the one bound up with the narrator's youth, the other with his old age and decline?

Every morning when the Duchesse was able to see him, the little old man in his black coif liked to be carried in a sedan-chair to the Viscountess de Longueville's window in Pall Mall, whence, having paid his respects, he would continue on to Chelsea, carefully nursing a pound of butter churned in his own little dairy for his beloved's breakfast.

It says much for Montagu's kindliness of heart, so far as his more indigent friends were concerned, that he did not disdain to return Saint Evremond's visits, and even to partake of a meal at his modest abode. On one occasion Lord Montagu seems to have found the loin of veal little to his palate, but when told it had been sent by the Duchesse Mazarin, whose health was drunk three times, swore he would eat no mutton as long as he lived unless it came from her at Bath. As Saint Evremond allowed his house to be shared by ducks, hens, monkeys and parrots, so that all was thrown into a higgledy-piggledy state of disorder, Montagu must have found his visits something of an ordeal, yet for all that never blenched from them.

If latterly a shadow fell on their conversation, it was because of the thought that the Duchesse, who had often joined the joyous reunions, was numbered among the dead.[1] By frequent visits to her little house in Paradise Row, Chelsea, Montagu had tried to make her believe that she still retained much of her youthful glamour. If she was not entirely deceived, she was at least grateful and voiced her gratitude in unqualified praise. "Let but a thing please Lord Montagu," she said, "and it was as good as done, whatever the trouble, care or labour involved." Often she must have contrasted his love of beautiful things with the outrageous vandalism of her bigoted, semi-mad husband, who destroyed precious Renaissance statues for fear they might fill her with obscene thoughts, such as, in his opinion, watching cows being milked might do.[2]

After the death of William, which occurred on March 8th, 1702, Montagu was compelled by business to spend much of his time in London. The accession of Queen Anne entailed the active exercise of his Mastership of the Great Wardrobe. Amongst the old warrants of the Lord Chamberlain at the Record Office is one dated 1702, addressed to him. It is in the form of a command to provide three *umbrellos* for the Chapel Royal and two for the ante-Chapel.[3]

The Whig party made increasing demands on his advice and service, and always with an eye to the dukedom, which still remained his primary ambition, he kept close to Parliament, the court and the leaders of the nation. The future of his son, now fourteen and back from the Continent, inspired most of his far-seeing moves. He was wishful of seeing him settled, to the extent of being sensibly and happily married. *Sensibly* in his case meant *profitably*. Taking long views, he had begun some years before to provide for him, agreeing with King William, conditionally on the position

[1] The Duchesse died in June, 1699. [2] See Chapter VIII, *A Regular Card*
[3] *Memorials of St. James's Palace*, by Edgar Sheppard.

of Master of the Great Wardrobe passing after him to his son, to forgo the revenues for the fixed sum of £2,000 per annum, roughly a drop of £1,000 a year. In his opinion the wisest choice his son could make when marrying was Lady Mary Churchill, last of the unmarried daughters of the Duke of Marlborough.

The youth, to the great delight of the Earl, needed no urging. Almost at sight he had fallen deeply in love with this beautiful, high-spirited and seemingly amiable girl, just a year older than himself, soon destined to become a reigning toast. So far from having the field to himself, he had to compete with other high-born suitors, equally anxious to secure so rare a matrimonial prize. Among them were the Earl of Huntingdon, Lord Tullibardine [son of the Duke of Atholl] and Lord Mordaunt [son of the eccentric Earl of Peterborough], but either on the grounds of character or their daughter's own objections, Lady Mary's parents did not think them suitable. Of all, Montagu's son impressed them most favourably, and as Lady Mary was similarly minded, there seemed no objection to the match beyond the youthful age of the parties. On that score, Marlborough and his wife, heeding their daughter's plea, refused to give any definite answer for a year.

From a material point of view the proposed marriage conferred many advantages on both sides. It protected Marlborough, during his absence abroad, from any hostile combination of Whigs and Tories, Lord Montagu being a power to be reckoned with in the Whig party, and it ensured his daughter a very handsome husband of substantial means. In return it promised Lord Montagu the benefit of the influence which the Duke and Duchess exerted over the queen—the surest avenue to the elusive dukedom. The year's grace having ended, and Lady Mary having in the interim found no more attractive suitor, Lord Monthermer, to give the young man his courtesy title, received the answer he craved, the marriage, which particularly delighted that keen matchmaker, the Duchess, taking place on March 20th, 1705. Queen Anne presented the bride with a great quantity of gold plate and £5,000, treating her as she had done the other daughters of the Duke, and at the same time confirmed the reversion to the bridegroom, on his father's death, of the Mastership of the Great Wardrobe.

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On April 14th, through the direct intervention of the Duchess, whom Anne was always ready to oblige, Montagu was created Marquis of Monthermer and Duke of Montagu. He had reached his goal after a series of adventures which had seemed more likely to lead him to the executioner's block. It was an astonishing performance for a man who, twenty-seven years before, had been disgraced by the queen's uncle, Charles II., and was known by many to have been in the pay of Louis. He had come level in rank with the man he had betrayed, Danby, now Duke of Leeds. But whereas the ex-Lord Treasurer seemed a spent force, there was no telling what further triumphs awaited this resourceful careerist, who, because of his Whig associations, and his alliance with the Duke of Marlborough, was obviously in a very powerful position.

The rhymesters, making fun of the promotion, had the time of their lives. Best known of the derisory verses were those attributed to a Mr. Gwinnet:

> The Queen, like heaven, shines equally on all,
> Her favours now, without distinction fall.
> Great Read[1] and slender Hannes,[2] both knighted, show
> That none their honours shall to merit owe.
> That Popish doctrine is exploded quite,
> Or Ralph had been no Duke, and Read no knight;
> That none may virtue or their learning plead
> This has no *grace*, and that can hardly *read*.[3]

Of the views both on the marriage and the Dukedom, none should have exceeded in piquancy those expressed by the Duchess of Cleveland, who that November, being in her 65th year, would go through a form of marriage with the bigamist, *Beau* Feilding, aptly described by Swift as "one of those who made mean figures upon some remarkable occasions". How strange and tantalising the thought that the lover she had pecuniarily helped [Marlborough] and the would-be lover whom she had sought to ruin, should be linked by the union of their respective offspring!

While other people were busy exchanging jokes at his expense, jokes which bounced harmlessly off his rhinoceros-like hide, the new Duke was busy attempting to give the final touches to his aggrandisement. That he was pleased with himself goes without saying, but to suggest that he was satisfied would be greatly to underestimate Montagu's opinion of himself and his merits. If the Duke of Leeds was entitled to the Garter, so was he. It was not a matter of deserts, so much as of equal treatment. He felt he had only to mention the discrepancy to Duchess Sarah, to whom he had been showing himself most attentive, sending her, for instance, the little cakes she liked, for the necessary adjustment to be made. Accordingly he coolly invited her to secure him the coveted decoration.

The answer he received must temporarily have jolted even a man of his hardened sensibilities. There were many applicants for the Garter, some pleading past, others future, services; but as there was only one Garter to be disposed of, the queen, so as not to disoblige anyone, had decided to defer making the choice until more vacancies were available. "Knowing the queen's mind before I received your commands," added the Duchess, "I have not acquainted Her Majesty with what you have desired, being in some doubt whether you would have me speak on a thing that seems so remote."

Having regained his composure, Duke Ralph tried another tack. If he could do nothing for the time being for himself, he might be able to squeeze some favour for his son. Twice he tackled the Duchess Sarah about a remunerative sinecure, the captaincy of the Yeomen of the Guard, for Lord Monthermer, but though he described her attitude as unreasonable, he was unable to get her to budge from the position that, as her son-in-law had already the reversion of one of the best offices in the gift of the queen, the

[1] Sir William Read was formerly a mountebank and barber, who could neither read nor write.

[2] Sir Edward Hannes, one of the queen's physicians, was notoriously off his head.

[3] Given in Top. and Gen., Vol. III, pp. 153 and 379. Quoted in *The Complete Peerage*.

Mastership of the Wardrobe, to ask for more would be to convict herself of extortion. It was impossible for Her Majesty to give two great offices to one person. True the title [the Dukedom] and the Wardrobe reversion had been granted on account of the marriage, but the queen regarded both as a favour on her part.

Unabashed, Montagu returned to the question of the Garter, which he was persuaded was being denied him because of mistaken punctilio. He put his case before Marlborough, who, however, was no more encouraging. The Garter, he explained, was earmarked for the kings of Sweden and Denmark, the peace to decide which of the two best merited it. In the hope that something might come from that direction, he renewed his intimacy with the Electress Sophia, in whose domains his son Winwood had died. She had written congratulating him on Lord Monthermer's marriage, and saying that all that concerned father and son interested her. He took the aged Princess at her word, and racked his brains to find out how he could turn her goodwill to profit.

Montagu's eagerness to grasp every honour for himself, and every sinecure for his easy-going, gentle-natured son, was partly due to his belief that, if the family aggrandisement were to be carried a stage further, the impetus must come from him who was so much better equipped for the battle of life. Sometimes a yearning note crept into his utterances, as if he regretted his age and the limitations it imposed on his energies. At such moments, bearing him in mind, one is better able to understand the feelings of Napoleon when he coined that haunting phrase, *Si seulement j'étais mon fils*! His perplexity as to the next step was ended by death, which came rather suddenly on March 9th, 1709. He was seventy years of age.

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It may seem strange that a man of his undoubted ability, good taste and culture, should, in the desire for riches and social aggrandisement, lend himself not only to such ignoble compliances, but so pitiably demean himself. Really there is no mystery about his character. Like so many of the Restoration personalities he considered that all expedients, discreditable or otherwise, were justified, provided they led to success. In his outlook, as well as his code of honour, he was not essentially different from Buckingham, Danby or Sunderland, to mention but three of the prominent figures in that degraded epoch. What is difficult to understand is why such admirable parents should have produced so unworthy a son, and how so base-minded a father came, in turn, to beget such a good-natured, large-hearted, albeit eccentric son.

Even as we pose the problem we realise, as was said at the outset, that Montagu had also his good points. We can never dismiss as entirely worthless, or beyond generous consideration, the man who was proud to be numbered among the friends and benefactors of La Fontaine before madness overtook him, of old Saint Evremond, who after the death of the Duchesse Mazarin would, indeed, have felt lonely and deserted but for the hospitable attentions of Montagu, and, finally, of Boileau, who found pleasure in converse with this intelligent and sympathetic Englishman.

The fact that Montagu regarded the ruthless prosecution of his cause as

almost a sacred duty did not prevent him from undertaking what were clearly labours of love on behalf of those he liked. Winding up the estate of the Duchesse Mazarin was his way of paying tribute to the fond memories which she had bequeathed him.

Apart from the Duke of Leeds, itching to publish his *Apologia*, few people other than the immediate relatives were greatly concerned over Montagu's passing. The general feeling was well expressed by Anne Hadley, exchanging confidences with her cousin, Abigail Harley:

"Here is [are] no lamentations for the Duke of Montagu, but he, by departing, has given the inquisitive world the long-desired satisfaction of knowing his mad Duchess to be alive. They say she will be given to the Duke of Newcastle when a Commission of lunacy is taken out, and, what is more, will come in for her thirds [a wife's portion] of her, or her pretended husband's, estate. For my part, I am apt to think, could he have foreseen or rather believed, at what distance this present world and he would soon have been, he for the wealth and honour of her family would discreetly have knocked her ladyship on the head in good time."[1]

As the position as guardian of the Duchess carried with it a substantial income, there was no lack of applicants. Eventually, after being officially declared a lunatic incapable of attending to her affairs, she was entrusted to the care of John, Duke of Newcastle, Thomas, Earl of Thanet, and the Earl of Sunderland, who had Newcastle House suitably prepared for her reception. But only by dint of the most cunning artifices was she induced to transfer the seat of her imperial throne from Bloomsbury to Clerkenwell.

If in the shades the spirit of Ralph Montagu, 1st Duke of Montagu, was sensitive to the happenings in this mundane sphere, then it must have stirred uneasily at the surprising turn of events. Gone was the £8,000 a year that had helped to support the extravagant splendour of the Montagu hospitality, but, cruellest blow of all, gone, too, from the income left by him to his son and heir was the one-third to which the long-lived mad Duchess was entitled. Favoured in life he had been mocked in death. The hand which had helped to feed him now penalised his son.

Year after year, the demented widow, humoured in her crazy whims, lived on, while refreshed by the fertile conceits of saucy playwrights, the story of her wooing by the crafty 1st Duke of Montagu took on ever new flights of fancy. Finally, when nearly everybody was dead who had known the poor lady in her youth, and when for nearly fifty years the dust had lain over the grave of her first sorely-tried husband, she closed her eyes for ever on a world that had begun to think that in her madness reposed the secret of eternal life.

* Montagu's daughter, Lady Anne Montagu, married first, Alexander Popham, of Littlecote, Wilts, whose rich family was linked with the Seymours, and second, Major-Gen. Harvey. Ever attentive to his family concerns, Montagu tutored his son-in-law Popham in politics, and, when the young man was standing as M.P. for Chippenham, drafted for him his election address.

[1] Welbeck MSS., London, March 16th, 1709. Quoted in *Christopher Monck, Duke of Albemarle*, by E. F. Ward.

CHAPTER FIVE

A BORN INTRIGUER

"THE cleverest woman in England is also the greatest intriguer."[1] In such terms was Honoré Courtin, the French Ambassador, to sum up Elizabeth, Lady Harvey, often his guest, less often his hostess. As he knew Ralph Montagu's sister as well as anybody, his opinion is deserving of every respect. Tremendously interested in the opposite sex, he studied Lady Harvey not only from the point of view of her usefulness to him, a faithful servant of Louis XIV., but as an unusually gifted specimen of feminine Restoration society, who by sheer force of personality managed to dominate her compeers. Her charm certainly did not lie in her physical endowment, for like her brother Ralph she had no good looks to speak of. Such fascination as she exerted both over men and women was largely mental, though rumour attributed to her a generous measure of sexual adventures, some more scandalous than others. Hers was the curious notoriety which pursues women credited with strange, secret sins.

A sense of intellectual superiority placed her at ease in most circles, and even Charles II. was sufficiently impressed by her cleverness to be often her host at dinner. Thanks to her indifferent looks she enjoyed the distinction of being one of the few women at Court to escape an invitation to join the royal harem.

Lady Harvey resembled her brother to the extent of being a valuable friend and a dangerous enemy, as Courtin, early in his ambassadorial career, was to discover. Thoroughly corrupt and immoral, she was ready and willing to aid the designs of France, yet would have recoiled from the idea of being thought unpatriotic and traitorous.

As the king was busy filling his coffers with French gold, it was surely churlish to want to deny her a few hundred louis d'or.

The French Ambassador was never tired of talking to his Foreign Minister, Pomponne, of her brilliant wit. That probably accounted for his eagerness to include her in his parties. Like most Frenchmen of his day he loved gossip, and half an hour's conversation with Lady Harvey was sufficient to stock him with scandal to last him for a month. In her talk she was gay, audacious and charmingly frank, sparing not even the most highly placed.

Had she not been busily occupied in various political manœuvres on behalf of her brother, one can imagine Lady Harvey presiding with uncommon grace over a well-conducted *salon*, so keen was her delight in the companionship of men of genius. Like her brother she, too, had a flair for spotting beautiful objects of art, and an appreciable part of her leisure was spent in searching for them, or, in the case of tapestries, arranging for their manufacture. Lest her taste should occasionally be at fault and betray her into acquiring second-rate examples, she was careful first to consult Sir Sackville Crow, manager of the Royal Tapestry works at Mortlake, and it is some

[1] Courtin to Pomponne, July 20th, 1676.

criterion of the quality of the tapestries she did acquire that when the Countess of Rutland was desirous of adding to her own stock, Crow should refer her to Lady Harvey. He could think of no better source of supply.[1]

Her frequent visits to her brother in Paris could not fail to arouse the curiosity of Louis, who wondered each time what particular intrigue was enlisting her undoubted gifts. Hence the inclusion in the letters of his Ambassadors [Courtin and Barrillon] of so many references to the lady, not a few being scurrilities dredged from the malicious remarks of enemies. Neither Courtin nor Barrillon required to be told that in due course these gossip-laden letters would be placed before His Most Christian Majesty. Like most French kings, Louis had a weakness for poking his nose into the private affairs of important personages, and thoroughly relished the tasty manner in which Barrillon, in particular, served up the chit-chat gathered for his special benefit. He did not fail to notice, nor did he quickly forget, Barrillon's definition of her as one "of bold and enterprising spirit, who has interest in and connection with a great number of persons of the Court and Parliament, and is as deeply involved as her brother in all intrigues."

Even in the unflattering rôle of conspirator and mischief-maker, Lady Harvey has some claim to be regarded as a figure whom Restoration history ought not to ignore. Had she been French, she would long ago, like her contemporary, the Duchesse de Chevreuse, have been commemorated in a volume all to herself.

Her interest in politics was an inherited trait, most probably a legacy from her mother, who was the daughter of the distinguished statesman, Sir Ralph Winwood, Secretary of State to James I. Lord Arlington, who filled the same office under Charles II., recognised her adroitness not only in engineering intrigues on her own account, but in getting the measure of those promoted by rival camps. In 1669, early in his first Paris Ambassadorship, Ralph Montagu began to use his sister as the bearer of verbal messages, either to Arlington or the king, which he deemed unsafe to commit to paper. Thus Arlington learnt that Sir Ellis Leighton, an amusing rascal very amenable to bribery, some time the creature of Buckingham, was coming to Paris, and might be profitably used.

That Lady Harvey's cleverness had important results might be gathered from the numerous political coups attributed to her intervention or influence. She was credited with paving the way for Sir John Trevor, friend of her youth, to become Secretary of State, and with his aid bullying Arlington into dropping the Duke of Ormonde as Viceroy of Ireland and in his place appointing Lord Robartes.

In certain respects she was the counterpart of the Duchesse de Chevreuse, the fascinating friend of her uncle, Wat Montagu. While equally devoted to political plotting, they shared the same aversion to conventional morality, indeed any form of morality. Each was a law unto herself. In cleverness and culture they were in all likelihood evenly matched, but when it came to wit and saucy repartee, the Englishwoman was first and the other a long way behind. On the other hand, as a stealer of men's hearts, Lady Harvey was totally outclassed by the Duchesse, who had the reputation of being

[1] *Rutland Papers.*

one of the handsomest women in France. The former might evoke admiration with her mental sprightliness, but in the ability to win devotion that would not stop short of death, she could not compare with the Frenchwoman.

While the aim of each was power, their ultimate objectives were not at all similar. The Duchesse wanted power for herself, Lady Harvey to further the aggrandisement of her brother. In both pride of race was firmly enthroned, a stimulus to certain forms of conduct, a deterrent to others. To it the Duchesse owed her authoritative poise, before which the great ones of France often quailed; in Lady Harvey's case it was reflected in a craving for the distinction conferred by high rating in the peerage. Hence her willingness, following the lead of her shameless brother, to tout incessantly for an earldom for her father, an honourable gentleman, whose sole desire was to be left in peace, he having for some years past realised the worthlessness of honours conferred by the king [Charles II.]. She, however, saw no reason why the good Boughton stock should not be distinguished by the same quarterings as the Sandwich and Manchester branches of the Montagu family. It vexed her to think that for such courtesy title as she bore she was indebted to her husband, Sir Daniel Harvey, with whom latterly she had got on none too well.

On August 26th, 1669, gauging instinctively what his sister was thinking, Ralph Montagu dropped her this line from Paris: "I know you have a mind to be a lady upon your own account, as upon Sir Daniel's, and therefore I intend after the Parliament has sat to engage *Madame* [Charles II.'s sister] to write to the king about my father's business; but first pray ask Lord Arlington his opinion, for if he does not approve of it, there is no meddling in it, and I believe he is as willing to have it done (i.e. making Lord Montagu an Earl) as you and I."[1] Than this letter we can have no better illustration of the way brother and sister combined for the former's good—since at bottom it was the son's, and not the father's, feelings that were being considered.

When exchanging letters the pair dropped all reserve, unpacking their thoughts in the freest language. Montagu adjured his sister to make the fullest use of the king's supposed liking for her; "*Madame* has showed me two or three more letters of the king's . . . concerning you. I dare tell you that he is kinder to you, and you have more credit with him than you think you have; for all he says of you is as of one that he has a good opinion of, and believes loves him better than anybody, which, you know, gives one more credit with anybody than any other thing in the world."

That brother and sister should be so sympathetically inclined was not surprising, when one takes into account the peculiar circumstances of their youthful upbringing. Their mother, the virtuous Anne Winwood, died when all three children, Edward, Ralph and Elizabeth, were quite small. From September, 1642, sadly in need of a mother's care, they were entrusted to their grandmother, Lady Winwood, who, being assured by the sorrowing husband that he had loved his wife too dearly to think of marrying again, reluctantly agreed to be responsible for their future. They grew up at the Winwood mansion, Ditton Park, Buckinghamshire, treated with every

[1] Buccleuch MSS.

consideration, but not molly-coddled. As soon as they were old enough, the two boys, *Ned* and *Raphe*, as they were affectionately known, were sent to Westminster, while Betty was handed over to an Academy for Ladies run with commendable strictness. At holiday-time, if their father, whose temper was uncertain, was sufficiently agreeable, all three were allowed to return to Boughton; otherwise they inflicted their mischievous presence on the long-suffering grandmother, whose impatience and disgust at their boisterous manners were mirrored in vigorously-worded letters to the father, much too hasty and irascible to be the most successful of parents.

Betty, fond of joining in her brothers' rough games, developed into too much of a hoyden to please the stately lady, who often felt called upon to apologise for her granddaughter's behaviour. The girl, invited to be the guest in Hampshire of Sir John Trevor (future Secretary of State), did not mind making the journey on horseback in the foulest weather.[1] So froward was her behaviour that Lady Winwood advised Lord Montagu to marry her off at the first suitable opportunity. He sounded Philip, 4th Earl of Pembroke, about a match with his grandson, Thomas Herbert. That young man, however, already had his eye on a young lady of the Seymour family, so nothing came of the overture, though Lord Pembroke, very much the rake, with more politeness than sincerity, professed to be greatly attracted by the idea of linking up with so religious a family as the Montagues of Boughton.

Eventually a husband for Betty was found in the person of Sir Daniel Harvey, son of that rich merchant of Croydon who was the means of introducing Archbishop Laud to young Edward Hyde, the future Earl of Clarendon.[2] While Lord Montagu might have hoped to recruit his son-in-law from the old ruling families, he was not a little relieved to have the unruly young woman off his hands. Seldom in those days was a peer with daughters to marry to be envied. The position was well put by Charles Bertie, writing to his niece, the Countess of Rutland: " Husbands are very bad, and scarce any good ones, which troubles me extremely upon Lady Bridgett's account [the Countess's sister]. Ungrateful and vile Age. Men look more to be courted as women used to formerly."[3]

Judged by his past record Sir Daniel Harvey promised to turn out a wise choice. On the death of his father he had been placed under the guardianship of the great city magnate, Sir Eliab Harvey, who would appear not to be his brother, as asserted in various quarters, but his uncle. He could not have had a better guardian, for Eliab, besides being a fine man of business, was a person of high moral probity who took after his brother, William Harvey, discoverer of the circulation of the blood. Eliab's first city residence was on Lawrence Poultney Hill, Upper Thames Street, but later he moved to Cockaine House, Broad Street, where, favoured by luck, he escaped the

[1] August, 1648.

[2] Embarrassed by a host of oppressive regulations, a legacy of the regime of the late Lord Treasurer Portland, the London merchants, headed by Sir Daniel Harvey, senior, petitioned Laud, his successor, to lift their burden. In the course of the conversations, Laud met young Edward Hyde, the rising lawyer, who drafted and conducted the petition. The impression Laud then formed of Hyde's ability and courage helped to lay the foundations of the future Chancellor's career.

[3] *Rutland Papers.*

Great Fire: "Of the city itself," to repeat a contemporary letter written immediately after the great disaster, "there remains only all Smithfield and St. Bartholomew's, Aldersgate and part of Broad Street, the fire being stopped there before it came to Sir Eliab Harvey's whose house [is] preserved." The worthy knight had also a country house at Roehampton. Here and in the city, William, who owned a place in Combe, Surrey, often stayed with his brother.

. . . . . .

At the Restoration, Betty's husband, probably through the influence of his father-in-law, Lord Montagu, was knighted. He successfully stood for Parliament and was appointed Ranger of Richmond Park, which accounts for his having a country house at Combe, for there is no record of the Combe home of his uncle William descending to him. In London, after his marriage, he lived in Great Newport Street, Long Acre, in Charles II.'s day a fashionable quarter. At first he seems to have been amply provided with means, but what with loans to his wastrel of a brother-in-law, Edward Montagu [the hand-squeezing hero] and what with his wife's extravagance, much of his capital was soon dissipated.

As early as 1661, Pepys, whose hastily-formed opinion of Lady Harvey was that she was a good woman, seems to have been interested in the Harvey household. They had living with them at the time a Mrs. Pepys, [apparently no relation of the diarist] whose passionate desire was to share a room in her namesake's house, a request which Pepys, lamentably weak-willed as a rule where women were concerned, showed no eagerness to grant.

The following January [1662] Pepys's business called him to the Harvey abode, whither he had tracked down Edward Montagu, who appears to have got the Earl of Sandwich's affairs into an untidy muddle. He took at once to Sir Daniel, and in June, 1666, he and Evelyn were among the few people to whom Harvey, an active combatant, confided his impressions of the four days' fight with the Dutch, a tussle of which it is hard to say who remained the victors. From that day Pepys's concern in whatever took place under the Harvey roof, queer doings much of it, progressively grew. The climax of that interest was reached in July, 1667, when as the prelude to a reconciliation, Lady Castlemaine, who after a tiff had purposely kept away from the king, was known to be meeting him there. Indeed, as the diarist, much to his astonishment and disgust, was to learn from his crony, Mr. Povey,[1] not quite up-to-date with his information, Charles had sought her forgiveness for daring to doubt his responsibility for the child she was about to bear.

The process of atonement, if short, was thorough, and for Pepys's benefit, Mr. Pierce, the surgeon, better instructed than Mr. Povey, drew a pitiable picture of Charles *at Canossa*. Terrified by her threat to deposit all her bastards in his private apartments at Whitehall, the king had gone down on his knees to implore her pardon, pledging himself to offend no more. Pepys was at a loss to understand how the king, beset by cares of every

[1] Evelyn: "November 29th, 1676. I dined with Mr. Povey, one of the Masters of Requests, a nice contriver of all elegancies and exceedingly formal."

kind—the country sunk in debt and discontent everywhere rife—should yet be so moved by his lust as to rush twice a week to the Harvey establishment in order to spend the nights with Lady Castlemaine.

That the house in Great Newport Street should be turned, to use a politer phrase than meets the case, into a royal love-nest, was no doubt a strain on the comfort and convenience of the owners, but in her anxiety to stand well with the king, Lady Harvey was prepared to undertake any rôle, however undignified and exacting. However, it is not to be supposed that the appointments gained the following year by her husband and her brother Ralph were in the slightest degree connected with this degrading episode. In 1668, Sir Daniel, in urgent need of a job and anxious to break away from a domesticity that had become both irksome and obnoxious, gladly accepted the offer to become our Ambassador at Constantinople, while Ralph Montagu, in circumstances already fully described, was accredited Ambassador to France. Harvey had had enough of his " brimstone of a wife "[1] whom, once he had quitted these shores, he was destined never to see again.

The Constantinople post was much sought after because of the substantial emoluments paid by that great Corporation, the Levant Company, whose agent the envoy really was. He was expected to be an efficient instrument of the energetic trading policy pursued by the Company, which was fast becoming a formidable competitor of the Dutch. Sir Daniel, who was paid a salary of £2,500, plus a gratuity of £500 and an equipage allowance of £600, took over from the Earl of Winchilsea, the first peer in England to hold the office, to whom he was related by reason of the marriage of his sister Elizabeth to that nobleman's cousin, Heneage Finch.[2] It was presumably not the custom of wives to accompany their husbands on such missions; hence, much to his relief, Sir Daniel had not to invent excuses for going alone. Lady Harvey was equally relieved, regarding his absence as a magnificent opportunity for having her fling.

According to his instructions, Harvey's first duty on arrival at Constantinople was to offer his mediation between the Turks and Venice, being assured by his royal master, " you cannot do a more acceptable service to us, nor of more reputation, than in procuring and establishing our mediation in a work of so much advantage to Christendom." The gesture, which was no more than an expression of goodwill to the Venetians, fell flat for the good reason that the Grand Vizier, on his own account, following the fall of Candia (1669), came to terms with the republic.

Sir Daniel, who arrived at Constantinople at the end of December, 1668, died there four years later.[3] His widow, dispensing with the hypocrisy of prolonged mourning, quickly forgot about him, having in the interval become a prominent figure at court, apparently much liked by Charles. Through her persuasion he hoped to induce her father, Lord Montagu, to

[1] Burnet, answering the Duchess of Marlborough, explained that the reason for the great General Belisarius's decline in public esteem was that he had " a brimstone of a wife."

[2] Rawlinson MSS., A. 255 f.o. 68. Instructions to Sir Daniel Harvey. See *The English Embassy at Constantinople*, 1666–1762, by A. C. Wood, Eng. Hist. Review, October, 1925. The same author's *A History of the Levant Co.* should also be studied.

[3] He was succeeded by Sir John Finch, formerly English Minister at Florence.

withdraw from his self-imposed seclusion at Boughton and rejoin the royal circle. But the king's favour was a fragile foundation on which to build hopes for the future. In the winter of 1669, Mrs. Corey, a prominent member of Killigrew's company, who played Doll Common in *The Alchymist* and Sempronia in *Catiline's Conspiracy*, both plays by Ben Jonson, caused ructions by imitating Lady Harvey in the latter rôle.

In the play, the poet has kept faithfully to the description of Sempronia's character given by Sallust with admirable brevity. Presumed to be the mother of Brutus, who stabbed Cæsar, she was known for the masculine daring of her actions. Few women gave such wilful cause for notoriety. Of noble birth and handsome bearing, well versed in Greek and Roman literature, she added to many accomplishments ministering to voluptuousness the gift of playing the lyre and dancing exquisitely. "But there was nothing," remarks Sallust, "which she held so cheap as modesty and chastity: you could not easily say whether she was less sparing of her money or her honour; her desires were so ardent that she sought men more often than she was sought by them. Even before the time of the [Catiline] conspiracy, she had often broken her word, repudiated her debts, been privy to murder; poverty and extravagance combined to drive her headlong. Nevertheless she was a woman of no mean endowments; she could write verses, bandy jests, and use language which was modest or tender or wanton; in fine she possessed a high degree of wit and of charm."[1]

Such being Sempronia's character, plus one or two shrewd touches thrown in by Jonson, it was understandable that Lady Harvey should be infuriated at being likened to her; nor was her anger lessened by the knowledge that all at court knew it was she, rather than Sempronia, who supposedly was being portrayed on the stage.

Without loss of time she called on her kinsman, Edward, 2nd Earl of Manchester, who was Lord Chamberlain, to bring the offensive actress to boot. He ordered Mrs. Corey to be gaoled. She in turn appealed to Lady Castlemaine, who had by now dropped all pretence of friendship for Lady Harvey, indeed was her avowed enemy (as she was later to become of Ralph Montagu). Obedient to the request of the reigning Sultana, Charles ordered the actress's release. What was worse, he agreed at Lady Castlemaine's suggestion to the performance being repeated in his presence, with the mimicry, where possible, made even more offensive. Seeing that in the king's present mood it was useless to protest, Lady Harvey and her friends retaliated by pelting the actress with rotten oranges.

That by participating in the spiteful affair Charles was making himself cheap and ridiculous, as Pepys was quick to point out, does not seem to have occurred to him. All that mattered was that he and Lady Castlemaine should be assured a good laugh. The fact that both were in Lady Harvey's debt for services rendered at the time of the breach and reconciliation was conveniently forgotten. If the king emerged from the episode with no small loss of dignity, Lady Castlemaine fared even worse. Disinterested onlookers saw her, possibly for the first time, in her true colours: a mean, vindictive, grasping woman, ready to exploit the king to gratify her sorriest whim.

[1] *Sallust.* Trans. by J. C. Rolfe. Loeb Classical Library, Heinemann.

What had caused Lady Castlemaine to hate Lady Harvey, whom, earlier on, she had professed to like? Nobody, hitherto, has attempted to answer that question, though the explanation is fairly obvious. Lady Harvey had struck up a great friendship with the Duchess of Buckingham, a little, brown, lean woman, who condoned her husband's adulteries and cheerfully helped him in his intrigues. The Duchess, anxious to see Lady Castlemaine supplanted by a new and more pliant favourite, had joined the body of conspirators who aimed at bringing in *La Belle* Stewart, afterwards Duchess of Richmond, the king's latest fancy. Lady Castlemaine, now relegated to Berkshire House, St. James's, swore to be revenged on all engaged in the plot, particularly Lady Harvey, who from being constantly seen in the company of the Duchess of Buckingham was assumed to be the ringleader. So at the first opportunity she struck at her former friend.

The pronounced advertisement of Lady Harvey's failings, already a matter of whispered comment, greatly annoyed the members of the Montagu family, especially her brother Ralph. For days she was the talk of two capitals. Colbert de Croissy, the French Ambassador, thought the episode important, certainly piquant, enough to include in his dispatches: "The ways and doings of Lady Harvey have been undisguisedly [*au naturel*] portrayed under the name of Sempronia, and to the tune of great applause." Much diverted by the news, which was promptly passed on to him, Louis answered: " I read with much amusement the curious circumstances related in your letter to the *Sieur* de Lionne and which he communicated to me yesterday"—February 9th, 1669.[1]

Colbert's letters elaborating on the scandal are stated by Forneron[2] to have points of resemblance with the satires of Juvenal, which were inspired by the vices of the patrician ladies of Rome. But more extraordinary than the wanton behaviour attributed to Lady Harvey was the readiness of the two kings, Charles II. and Louis XIV., temporarily to put aside their pourparlers for a secret treaty intended to be the prelude to the catholicization of England, in order to let their imaginations dwell on the presumed habits of Ralph Montagu's sister. What Charles discussed with frank coarseness, Louis debated with unctuous solemnity.

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Between February and August [1669] Lady Harvey seems to have fully recovered her position at court, that is, if the king's own words to his sister, quoted by *Madame* to Ralph Montagu, are to be believed. The increasing trust which the Princess put in the Ambassador undoubtedly contributed to this result, for Charles was apt to share his beloved sister's likes and dislikes. But other factors had helped—Lady Harvey's usefulness to Arlington and her intimacy with Mrs. Chiffinch, officially the queen's sempstress, but actually the discreet attendant who conducted to the royal apartments the women who had assignations with Charles. Lady Harvey may not have liked buttering up a person with Mrs. Chiffinch's delicate responsibilities, but she was not disposed to reject her brother's advice: " August 26th, 1669.

[1] Aff. Etr., Tome XCIII, folio 234.
[2] *The Court of Charles II.*, by H. Forneron.

If Mrs. Chiffinch brings this [letter] herself, I suppose you will use her very kindly." Montagu's sister had taken the hint and Mrs. Chiffinch in return had made matters easier for her at court. At Whitehall, in Charles's day, it was continually a case of " wheels within wheels".

Whenever he was in any difficulty, Montagu was wont to seek the advice of his sister. One such occasion was the failure of the king to repay *Madame* the £10,000 granted her by Parliament at the Restoration. Having buoyed her up with false hopes of getting the money, the Ambassador felt morally bound to come to her rescue. He had engaged himself to find 5,500 louis d'or by February 2nd, and feared, if nothing meanwhile turned up, he would be in a terrible fix. "If I get well of this," he told his sister, " I promise you I will never meddle with such business again. Pray let me hear as soon as you can what is to be done and show Lord Arlington this letter from me." Apparently some of the money owing to *Madame* was repaid; at any rate Montagu was not required to find the promised cash.

It was to his sister he turned when, as a result of *Madame's* untimely death, the Princess Anne, the future queen, was left homeless. A servant of Lady Harvey's saw that the Princess was provided with everything she needed, pending more suitable arrangements in England.

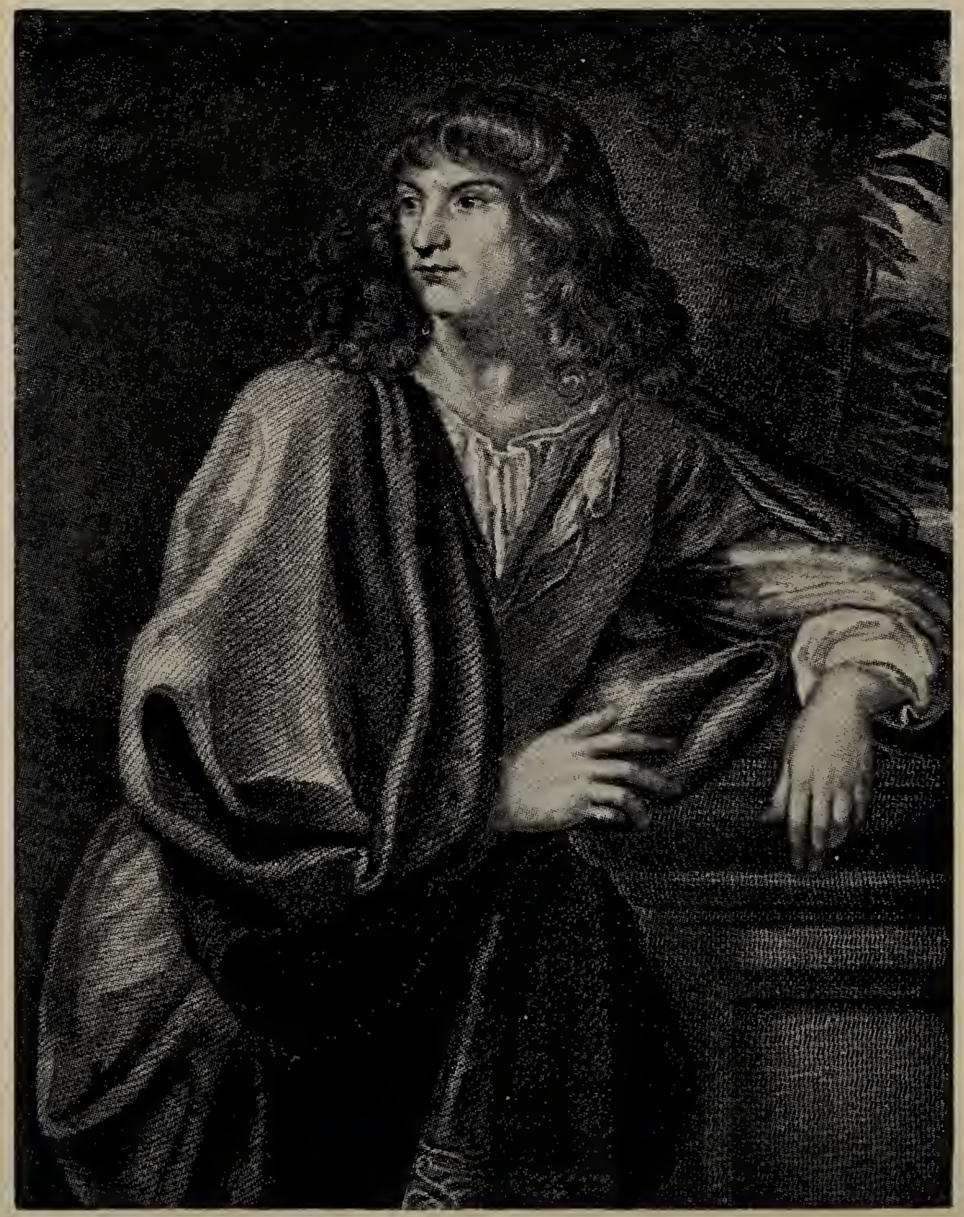
Buckingham, eager for the deposition of Lady Castlemaine, arranged for Mdlle. de Kéroualle, later Duchess of Portsmouth, to come over, but carelessly forgot his promise to act as her escort, and it was left to Montagu to pay her the necessary courtesies. He had a yacht sent over for her at Dieppe and otherwise contrived that she should reach Whitehall without discomfort. To mark her gratitude, she was particularly genial to his sister, but on learning from some kind friend of Lady Harvey's the inner history of the performance of Sempronia, tactlessly remarked, " the greater the truth the greater the libel". This, reaching the other's ears, made a rift inevitable. The eagerness with which Lady Harvey turned to the Frenchwoman's rivals, Nell Gwyn and the Duchesse Mazarin, was not calculated to heal the breach.

Personal troubles gave her much to think about. She had married her daughter Elizabeth, a self-assertive young woman, to that disappointing young man, Thomas Grey, 2nd Earl of Stamford (1654–1720) who had succeeded his grandfather, Henry Grey, 1st Earl, on August 21st, 1673. The marriage had taken place the following year, when he was in his twenty-first year. From the outset Anchitell Grey, the Earl's uncle, best known as compiler of the debates of the House of Commons, had done his best to break up the union by pretending that without his support his nephew could not stand up to his formidable mother-in-law, of whom, admittedly, he stood in considerable awe. On the slightest provocation, Lord Stamford who, according to Swift, looked and talked like a very weak man, flew to the shelter of his strong-willed uncle, justifiably concerned, as the second son of the 1st Earl, about his unbusiness like nephew's ruinously extravagant handling of the large estates that had come to him with the title.

In his uncle's opinion, he had, on marriage, made far too generous a settlement for the benefit of his wife. On the other hand, Lady Harvey, heeding her daughter's complaints, took the Earl to be an indifferent husband,

HORTENSE MANCINI, DUCHESSE MAZARIN
(After the portrait by Sir P. Lely)

MATTHEW PRIOR



ROBERT SPENCER, 2ND EARL OF SUNDERLAND

(After the portrait by Carlo Maratta)

narrow-minded and easily roused to anger, so did not hesitate to lecture him on his shortcomings. The inevitable explosion was not long in coming. Towards the close of 1675, when the marriage was rather more than eighteen months old, Lady Vaughan reported to her husband, the future Lord Russell, "Lord Stamford left his wife this morning at four o'clock and is gone to his uncle [Anchitell] Grey."[1]

Lady Harvey thought it wise to let her father, Lord Montagu, know what had happened: "I have not troubled your Lordship with an account of Lord Stamford's follies and impertinences, because they are too many for a letter, or for anybody's patience; so that I will only tell your Lordship in short that after his uncle had made him so impudent as to dare fall out with me, he made him leave his wife without telling her why he left her, or whither he went, so that she must shift for herself, as I mean to do, for I am extremely threatened to have the settlement I made of Lord Stamford's estate overthrown, and so my daughter to have nothing, unless I will quietly give Mr. Anchitell Grey the inheritance, which I am sure now he shall never have unless he can get it by force.

"I do not doubt but that the settlement is very good. However, my daughter shall run that hazard for herself, which I do not take to be near so great as what I have ventured for her. My Lord, if now Lord Stamford should have the confidence to wait on your Lordship, I hope you will be pleased to resent his ingratitude to me so much as to give him but a very cold welcome, which he deserves upon his own account, as well as upon mine, for I never met with such a pitiful creature."[2]

A year later, the death of his grandmother, Lady Stamford, released another estate for the benefit of Lord Stamford, and there was much talk of those obstinate enemies, Anchitell Grey and Lady Harvey, going to law about it.[3] However, the trouble blew over and peace once more reigned in the household. There were three children of the union, but all died young. When the Earl, who had foolishly involved himself in Monmouth's rebellion, was clapped into the Tower, his wife made an unsuccessful attempt to see him, a sign that the reconciliation had persisted. He regained his freedom in March, 1686.

Lady Stamford died in 1689, and two years later the Earl married again. According to old tradition, his house at Bradgate, Leicestershire, was purposely set on fire by his Countess, the outbreak originating in the room in which he slept. The Countess and her infant daughter, Lady Diana, narrowly escaped death. As a result of this reprehensible affair the Earl separated from his wife.[4] If the Countess did escape with her infant daughter, then it was the first and not the second wife who was concerned, for there was no issue of the second marriage. But the story is so beset with discrepancies that no part of it deserves to be accepted without reserve.

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While defending her daughter's interests with characteristic Montagu energy, Lady Harvey was immersed in the intrigues which were food and

[1] *Letters of Rachel, Lady Russell.*
[2] Buccleuch MSS.
[3] *Rutland Papers.*
[4] See Nichols's *Leicestershire*, Vol. III, p. 679.

drink to her. Thanks to the close ties she had established with Nell Gwyn and the Duchesse Mazarin, she moved freely in the royal circle and was an honoured guest at the king's table. Whenever the trio met they had a good laugh at the expense of the hated Duchess of Portsmouth. Often they were joined by Charlotte de Beverweert, affectionately known as "Lot", sister of the first Countess of Arlington, who was as little spared as the others by the professional scandalmongers. Grace, Lady Chaworth, writing to her brother, Lord Roos, future 1st Duke of Rutland, on May 4th, 1676, remarked that Mme. Mazarin was now living in a house in St. James's Park, (formerly belonging to Lord Windsor) loaned to her by the Duke of York; that ten days previously the Duchesse had supped with Lady Harvey, who was her most intimate friend, and that the king had come in and surprised them.[1]

That the Duchesse was in cordial relationship with both Lady Harvey and her brother Ralph was plain to all the world. There had never been any secret about it. Even before she had acted on Montagu's advice and come to England, she and the Ambassador had been warm friends. All that had happened since had tended to strengthen the bond between the Duchesse and the Montagu pair, who, if they used her for their own political purposes, were none the less extremely devoted to her.

Lady Harvey took special pains to adjust the relations of Nell Gywn and the Duchesse, so that instead of flying at each other's throats, they should concentrate on the overthrow of the mutual enemy, the Duchess of Portsmouth. She saw to it that the two were punctilious in exchanging tactful compliments. Thus when Nell Gwyn's eldest son was created Earl of Burford, by his father the king, the Duchesse was prompt with her congratulations, which courtesy Nell Gwyn [who lived at 79, Pall Mall], accompanied by Lady Harvey, returned by calling in person on her fascinating friend.

The visit was destined to produce one of those piquant scenes which enabled Courtin to give his dispatches something of the diverting touch of St. Simon, and which, in a more perfect world, ought to have provided either Mozart or Offenbach with an operatic theme after his own heart. Just as Nell Gwyn, Lady Harvey and Courtin, suave, good-tempered, and fun-loving, were comfortably seated in the Duchesse's abode, a fourth visitor, the last the company expected or desired, was announced, none other than the detestable Duchess of Portsmouth. Possibly restrained by the presence of the French Ambassador, from whose good opinion all expected to benefit, the four women remained on their best behaviour and all passed off peacefully. But on the departure of the thin-lipped Duchess, who throughout had preserved the cool, discreet, taciturn temper for which she was noted, the other three women exercised to the full their backbiting propensities. Turning to Courtin, who had been greatly enjoying himself, Nell blandly inquired why his royal master wasted his presents on the weeping willow who had just left, instead of bestowing them on her whose company the king of England found so much more preferable. Was it because the Ambassador was unaware of the real facts?

The teasing of Courtin having ended, the trio, disposed to ignore his

[1] *Rutland Papers.*

sex or to treat him as a privileged observer, relapsed into a suggestive familiarity, which culminated in Nell Gwyn allowing the other ladies to examine her underwear, whose reputed fineness aroused their curiosity. True to the popular idea of her character, she raised no objection to their lifting each petticoat in turn, nor was she averse to the equally inquisitive Courtin joining in the inspection, though such concerns scarcely came within his ambassadorial province. Recounting to the suitably edified Pomponne his impression of the colourful seance, he said, "Never in my life did I see such thorough cleanliness, neatness and sumptuousness. I should speak of other things that were also shown, if M. Lionne[1] were still Foreign Secretary, but with you I must be grave and proper and so, Monsieur, I end my letter."[2] Those who search the French archives will find this "grave and proper" diplomatic dispatch carefully preserved in the tomes devoted to the London correspondence of this most Pepys-like representative of France.

In explanation, as well as in excuse, of Courtin's conduct, M. Forneron declares that he had to enter into the amusements of the two Duchesses [Mazarin and Portsmouth] and the petticoat party that was behind them, without once forgetting that he represented the greatest king in Europe. His gallant and gracious manners, his wit and probably his broken English, greatly helped his address, and even his small stature was an advantage. The nobly-born and lately ennobled jades at Whitehall and St. James's treated him as a charming toy.

Meeting him at the theatre, Lady Harvey and her brother's particular friend, Mrs. Middleton, who was not thought to be unkind to her other male admirers, announced their intention of supping with him, each accompanied by a congenial woman friend. As Lady Harvey chose the Duchesse Mazarin and Mrs. Middleton plumped for the Duchess of Portsmouth, there was every reason to anticipate trouble at the party, especially as it had been swelled by Lady Beauclerk, who loathed Montagu's sister. But Courtin, determined that the women should not quarrel, contrived to get the warring couples into rooms by themselves and then locked them in. When he imagined they had either come to an agreement, or wrung each other's necks, he opened the doors. Judge of his delight to see Portsmouth and Mazarin emerge hand-in-hand, laughing and dancing. Even Lady Harvey made up her differences with the Frenchwoman and both were caught giggling over Louis's refusal to force the eccentric Duc Mazarin to increase his allowance to his wayward wife.[3]

Such satisfaction as Lady Harvey derived from the renewal of Charles's friendship, exemplified by the king's invitation to her father to return to court, was marred by the conviction that neither of her allies, Nell Gwyn and Hortense Mazarin, was nimble-witted or politically-minded enough to further her designs and those of her brother Ralph. Moreover, Charles was too shrewd to believe that Lady Harvey's interest in his two mistresses was entirely on account of their amiable qualities. As Courtin on March 4th,

[1] M. Lionne died at the end of 1671.
[2] *The Court of Charles II.*, by H. Forneron.
[3] *The Vagabond Duchess*, by C. H. Hartmann.

1677, remarked to Pomponne, the king of England was capable of profiting by the machinations of all the intriguers.

Though the plot to use *La Belle* Stewart had miscarried, Lady Harvey imagined she would be more successful with the young daughter of Mrs. Middleton. Her activities were intently followed by that astute man about town, Henry Savile, who, writing to his friend, the rakish Earl of Rochester, on June 4th, 1678, remarked that Lady Harvey, who loved plotting, was working body and soul to bring Mrs. Jenny Middleton into play, adding, "Her Ladyship, having little opportunity of seeing Charlemagne [Charles II.] upon her own account, wheedles poor Mrs. Nelly [Gwyn] into supping twice or thrice a week at W[illiam] C[hiffinch's] and carrying her with her; so that in good earnest this poor creature is betrayed by her ladyship to pimp against herself, for there her ladyship whispers and continues all matters to her own ends, as the other might easily perceive if she were not too giddy to mistrust a false friend."

Savile went on to suggest that Rochester should drop a line to Lady Southesk, who had so much wit and cunning, and thus prevent his friend Nell from being ingloriously exploited. The choice of Rochester as the champion of Nell Gwyn was curiously inept. When, a year later [July, 1679], the actress's mother was found drowned in a ditch, no reputed friend of the king's good-natured mistress other than Rochester would have been heartless enough to write that scurrilous lampoon, *A Panegyric on Nelly*, with the offensive lines:

> Nor was the mother's funeral less her care,
> No cost, no velvet, did the daughter spare ;
> Fine gilded 'scutcheons did the He(a)rse enrich,
> To celebrate this martyr of the Ditch.

And what is one to think of that exhibition of good manners, *The Lady of Pleasure*:

> The pious mother of this flaming whore,
> Maid, punk and bawd, full sixty years and more,
> Died drunk with brandy in a common-shore.

That he, of all men, should act as censor of morals would seem to convict him not only of uncharitableness, but of having, temporarily at least, lost his sense of humour.

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That spring of 1678 Lady Harvey spent with her brother in Paris, discussing family matters and sympathising with his various discontents. How little she suspected the *dénouement* which the late summer and autumn would bring—Montagu's disgrace, followed by his attack on Danby and inferentially on the king—might be gathered from her being Charles's supper guest so late as July or August.[1] The break with the court, which automatically followed her brother's link-up with the aggressive Opposition, in nowise put an end to her plotting. In all the pro-French intrigues promoted

[1] Nell Gwyn to Laurence Hyde, future Earl of Rochester, at Nimeguen : "We are going to sup with the king at Whitehall, and my Lady Harvey."

by Ralph Montagu, she was well to the fore, and with as little sense of shame took whatever money was offered her by Barrillon [Courtin's successor], who fobbed her off with a few hundred livres at a time. However, she had her revenge. When he tried to pump her as to the nature of the important proposal which her brother declared he had to make to Louis, she professed entire ignorance of the matter.

Her aptitude for intrigue allowed her to be as much in the confidence of Lord Shaftesbury as was her brother. Being much esteemed by Lady Shaftesbury, she was a frequent visitor to the Ashley home in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Among her friends she numbered Burnet, whom she often met at the house of her sister-in-law, Lady Russell. Indeed, she and Lady Scrope, whose wit was comparable with her own, were said to be the Bishop's only women friends. No doubt he found her as useful a guide as Ralph Montagu to the inner history of court events.

People seeing her with such notable figures as Monmouth [to whose cause she was devoted], Shaftesbury, Russell and Burnet, unwittingly exaggerated the extent, as well as the purpose, of her underground activities. Generally speaking, she was content to leave the initiative to her brother and merely follow up his moves as directed. As ever, she worked for his benefit rather than her own. Gossipers got into the habit of bracketing them. It was never a case of what one or the other was doing, but of what occupied them both. The basest view was taken of their motives. "I am not apt to think Lady Harvey and Mr. Montagu," remarked *Sacharissa* [Dorothy, Countess of Sunderland], "do anything out of good nature or generosity." Judged by their pecuniary transactions with France it was fair comment, but it was not true of all their behaviour. In ordinary circumstances Lady Harvey was a kind-hearted woman, and she showed it by her sympathetic behaviour to Lady Northumberland, when that poor lady was in mourning for her eldest son, and whenever illness prevented her from properly carrying out the duties of Ambassadress. The correspondence of Lady Russell gives us revealing glimpses of the way in which Lady Harvey danced attendance on her sister-in-law. In one letter, Lady Russell refers to her as "a perfect vision", a reference, no doubt, to the high colour which, following the example of the French ladies, she used on her cheeks. Her excessive rouging gave all the more edge to Mrs. Corey's impersonation of her as Sempronia, who, as Ben Jonson puts it, hides with paint and fine dresses her decay.

But Lady Harvey's tenderness was not confined to acts of sisterly devotion. She shone in her intercourse with Saint Evremond and La Fontaine, on both of which lonely men she took compassion. The French philosopher enjoyed nothing so much as a meal at her house. From a particular evening's entertainment, in 1689, he came away so pleased that nothing would satisfy him but writing his beloved Duchesse Mazarin a note of appreciation: "Mrs. Harvey's supper-party [and] the royal *Pâté* . . . put me into tolerably good spirits."[1]

La Fontaine was a friend of older standing. She had first become acquainted with him when her brother was Ambassador in Paris. He had

[1] *Letters of Saint Evremond.* Edited by John Hayward.

included the fabulist in the merry little parties which he was fond of giving at the Embassy, and thus had provided him with several opportunities of meeting Lady Harvey, who soon could be looked upon as one of his staunchest admirers. As a mark of gratitude he dedicated to her *Le Renard Anglois* (XXIII, Book XII), which she is supposed to have suggested to him, saying of her:

> Sound reason and a tender heart
> With thee are friends that never part.
> A hundred traits might swell the roll :—
> Suffice to name thy nobleness of soul ;
> Thy power to guide both men and things ;
> Thy temper open, bland and free,
> A gift that draweth friends to thee.[1]

Dedications are always suspect, but it is only fair to believe that in La Fontaine's view, at any rate, she deserved this compliment. We cannot forget that when he was aged, sick and in great danger of being left to his own resources, she hastened to offer him generous succour. The retirement in 1685 of Mme. de Sablière, who had attended alike to his spiritual needs and material wants, followed by the departure for London of another dear friend, the Duchesse de Bouillon, sister of the Duchesse Mazarin, had threatened the fabulist with that most dreaded of all fates—a lonely and miserable old age. It was in these circumstances that Lady Harvey, speaking for herself, her brother, the Duchesse Mazarin and others of the same devoted cenacle, renewed the invitation to him to come to London, where he would be assured the means of an honourable subsistence. But he was terrified at the prospect of the long, tiresome journey and, as his biographer, M. Hamel, says, felt he was too deeply rooted in his native soil to bear transplantation. Furthermore, two French princesses had come to his rescue, strengthening his reluctance to quit France. No one can doubt the wisdom of his decision. So rapidly was La Fontaine's mind losing its vigour and resiliency that presently he would demand constant medical attention.[2]

In her declining years, having less opportunity and perhaps less desire for meddling in affairs of State, Lady Harvey confined her always abundant energies to purely social activities. Faithful to old friends, she divided such time as she could spare from visits to her brother and sister-in-law, Lady Russell, to entertaining the Duchesse Mazarin, Saint Evremond and several other charming French exiles. On these occasions the conversation usually turned on Ninon de l'Enclos, with whom, thanks to the genial philosopher, she had become better acquainted. The octogenarian enchantress in the Rue des Tournelles, who was being assiduously courted by Lady Sandwich, a match for Lady Harvey in wit,[3] was delighted to think that another member of the proud Montagu family was glad to be thought her friend, and in a letter to Saint Evremond, written probably in the summer of 1698, explained that wishing to befriend a young man who was desirous of enlarging his worldly experience, she had asked him to call on the Englishwoman. That year was destined to bring Lady Harvey many sorrows, not least the

[1] *The Fables of La Fontaine* : Bohn Library, 1882.
[2] He died on April 15th, 1695.
[3] See last chapter : *The Fascinating "Gaoler"*.

death of the Duchesse Mazarin, who for twenty-four years had been her friend, confidant and comforter.

Though to listen to his mellow philosophy, spiced with piquant memories of great lovers and equally great sinners, was a comforting experience, old Evremond, his rheumy eyes choked with tears whenever he spoke of his dear, departed friend, scarcely made up to Lady Harvey for the loss of this wilful, extravagant, ill-balanced, yet withal delightful woman, prodigal in all things—love, money, life—who had come to be regarded as an integral feature of the Montagu circle. One by one the people she liked, or at least had been deeply interested in, had slipped into the eternal void—Charles, Monmouth, Shaftesbury, Nell Gwyn, the Duchesse Mazarin, and, greatest blow of all, her own daughter, to mention but a few.

The world, opening to the cold, frightening, eighteenth century, revolved round new characters, who were strange and, in a degree, unfriendly to her. That fortune again favoured her brother was a consoling thought to dispel some of the shadows which settled on her prevalent mood, the more so, as she frequently reminded herself, since, having aided and abetted him in most of his schemes, she was entitled to claim part of the credit. That for her the struggle was definitely over meant the loss of that feverish excitement which had been the very breath of her nostrils. Without the zest of battle, without the thrill of cunningly conceived intrigue, life, even at her age, took on the aspect of a bleak November day. To be a mere spectator of the clash of ambitions, which once it had been her joy and purpose to foster, was not only unamusing, but depressing.

So, in the year 1702, disillusioned, weary and not a little sad, she came to her end, mourned by very few—her brother, her niece and nephew, and old Evremond, whose own turn would come the following year. It was unmerited neglect, for in her lifetime she had conferred benefits on many, though not always the most deserving. Had her cleverness been applied to a worthier purpose than that of helping her brother to rise, gossip, which in her heyday was to give her little peace, might have had better cause for busying itself with her name, and certainly greater encouragement to canvass the good no less than the bad in her subtle, mischief-loving nature, a true mirror of the witty, unprincipled, pleasure-mad Restoration epoch.

CHAPTER SIX

THE FINANCIAL GENIUS

THOUGH in important respects they were as unlike each other as cousins could possibly be, Charles Montague, 1st Earl of Halifax, who in 1694 helped to found the Bank of England, and Ralph Montagu, 1st Duke of Montagu, shared much the same intellectual and æsthetic tastes. Both loved the companionship of men of letters, to whose needs as pillars of aristocratic patronage their purses were seldom shut; both specialised in the most generous forms of hospitality, and both, as part of their cultural idiosyncrasy, doted on charming domestic surroundings, in which beautiful pictures and exquisite furniture were a conspicuous feature.

To support these expensive foibles, as well as to achieve the sense of power, security and dignity which went with great riches, both struggled hard and not unsuccessfully to amass wealth. Ralph Montagu's short cut to fortune was to marry rich widows and sell his honour to France. With certain exceptions the means employed by Charles Montague remained his own secret. That they were effective can be gathered from his ability, within twenty-four years, starting from little or nothing, to accumulate possessions valued at £150,000, of which possibly a quarter may have been derived from royal grants and from savings from the income of between £4,000 and £8,000, which, for fourteen years, he drew as Auditor of the Exchequer. His enemies, who were no more inclined to spare him than they were Marlborough, nicknamed him "filcher", though when invited to substantiate their charges they got little further than vehement and scurrilous assertions. It did not strengthen their case that ninety per cent of his traducers would willingly have changed places with him.

That Montague managed to feather his nest so adroitly and expeditiously was a tribute to his cleverness and financial acumen, but we are left with the feeling that his standard of financial purity was less fastidious than that demanded to-day of Ministers of State and public servants. In fairness to him, however, it should be made clear that the age was one in which men who climbed to power felt they were entitled to substantial pickings, and if by means of the positions they filled they were unable to enrich themselves, they looked, and seldom in vain, to the monarch to confirm their hopes and anticipations with liberal grants. There were exceptions, notably that passionate High Churchman, the Earl of Nottingham, popularly known as "Old Dismal" because of his funereal expression, whose proud boast was that neither he nor his father owed a farthing's worth in money or land to the king's bounty, and that in four years' service as Secretary of State he had not added £10,000 to his fortune.

Montague admitted the favours he had received from the king [William III.], but pleaded that they were the legitimate and customary reward of meritorious service on behalf of the Crown. Nothing corrupt or dishonest

was ever proved against him, though his enemies, bent on his ruin, probed deeply into all his financial transactions when a Minister. Such historians as Ralph, who spoke loosely of his bargains with money-jobbers and of his fostering corruption, were only indulging in rhetorical abuse.

Much more dangerous to his reputation were the subtle methods employed by Charles Davenant, the clever but wholly unscrupulous Tory pamphleteer [" a very cloudy-looking man, fat and of middle stature "], who seasoned his sly diatribes with penetrating wit. Having first in a publication entitled *Discourses of Grants and Resumptions* held up John de Montaigu, a little insolent fellow [easily recognisable as Charles Montague], to public wrath, he went much further in his vilification, setting forth in a widely circulated tract, *The True Portrait of a Modern Whig: A Dialogue between Mr. Whiglove and Mr. Double at the Rummer Tavern, Queen Street*, what Montague's enemies for their own purposes chose to think of him. Without expressly naming his victim, he never left his readers in a moment's doubt as to who was meant.

Nobody, remarks Mr. Double by way of preface, is more despicable than a sneaking genius with moderate wealth and honours, and it were wrong to expect a man who started with £50 a year, and had no higher ambition than tithe-pigs and a small parsonage,[1] to remain satisfied with a barony, the most profitable employment in the nation[2] and an estate of £80,000. " No, let him aspire to be a Marquis, to have a blue ribbon [K.G.] and to be Lord High Treasurer.[3] As to the employment he has, he may assign it over to his brother[4] in trust for him, and if they raked up such prodigious fortunes in 7 and 8 years, what might be done if they get again into the same power and live any time? God be thanked, England is so much changed that now the people love a man the better, the more he robs them."

Neither to this, nor to any other attack on his honesty, did Montague reply. Indeed, within two years, so strange were the combinations possible in those extraordinary days, he was sufficiently reconciled to his defamer to be willing in face of the common danger, the war with France, to help him with material for a pamphlet published to promote national unity, then greatly upset by the persecution of the Dissenters.

That Montague started humbly enough may be gathered from his entry into public life as a Clerk of the Council, a position purchased at an outlay of £1,500, which was in sharp contrast to the £14,000 paid by Ralph Montagu for the Mastership of the Great Wardrobe. Where he got the money from is

[1] Charles Montague, having no expectations to speak of, was originally intended for the Church, favourite refuge of needy scions of the aristocracy, and to that end was supposed to be seeking a Fellowship while at Trinity College, Cambridge. In her ill-natured references to him, the Duchess of Marlborough repeats the story of his £50 a year patrimony.

[2, 3, 4] On vacating the Treasury Board after a brilliant term of service, he secured for himself the highly remunerative Auditorship of the Exchequer, which had the advantage of being permanent. Temporarily, the position was held in trust for him by his brother, Christopher. He aspired to be Lord High Treasurer, but when the distinction seemed likely to fall into his lap, it was, to his overpowering chagrin, denied him.

a matter of speculation. Most probably it came from the sexagenarian widow whom he had just married. By temperament, as much as by necessity, he was cautious, having in his blood little of the gambling or adventurous spirit which distinguished his cousin Ralph. What he did was as far as possible based on precise calculations, as though a first-class actuary had taken charge of his brain. In his affluent days he might take pleasure in joining the sportsmen, Godolphin and Wharton, at the races, but no stronger passion than that of mixing with congenial friends drew him to Newmarket Heath. It was a matter of supreme indifference to him which horse won, and in any case he was too shrewd to fall a victim to the wiles of Wharton, who at Newmarket generally managed to separate his associates from large sums of money.

A tendency to play for safety, a late flowering of his character, earned him a reputation for timidity, to which little in his previous record had acted as warning. That, weary of the ceaseless attacks of his political opponents, and nervous of the future of his party, the Whigs, he should wish to retire from the House of Commons, scene for five or six years of his great debating triumphs, and take refuge in the shelter of a well-paid sinecure from which he could not be moved, was conduct as sinewless as that which had led to his Tudor ancestor's disgrace. When all was going well, none could dispose of a more assured and jaunty manner than he, but when the House, responding to the lead of Harley, turned against him, none could be more abashed and spiritless. He, who in the phraseology of the period, had been wont to give the law to the Commons, now behaved as one in eclipse.

It was reasonable enough to plead that, in withdrawing from the Ministry, where he was both Chancellor of the Exchequer and First Lord of the Treasury, he was merely forestalling eventual dismissal by the king, forced to bow to the will of the Tory majority in the Commons; but when it came to explaining the indecent haste with which he laid claim to the £4,000 a year Auditorship of the Exchequer, what he had to say sounded singularly unconvincing, and those who complained that avarice was his besetting sin were not easily answered. Had he been getting on in years and poor into the bargain, he could scarcely have been blamed for pursuing the course he did, but as he was only forty, and, according to Davenant, already a rich man, he could well have afforded to take chances.

By any reckoning it was grave weakness on his part to desire the more friendly atmosphere of the Lords, where the Whigs still predominated. For, if true once, the belief that, being in the Upper House helped a politician to rise, no longer held good. Only at the express wish of the king[1] did his friend and colleague, Lord Somers, consent to leave the Commons, while Sir Robert Walpole, a much shrewder and more prescient politician than Montague, delayed his exit from the Lower House as long as possible. The fact is the House of Commons had become the most important element in the Constitution, and to change from the Lower to the Upper Assembly was to run the risk of exchanging power for dignity. Montague thought he

[1] May 8th, 1695. Shrewsbury to Somers: "The king is really convinced it is for his service that you should accept a title."

would gain both security and dignity. Like Bolingbroke, he did not shine in tight corners.[1]

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In painting the portrait of Montague we must always keep that extraordinary character, Shrewsbury, in mind. Not only does he help to shape and correct the outlines, but he constitutes an invaluable basis of comparison. The timidity or exaggerated prudence which we condemn in the former, intent on scaling the heights of power, we are inclined to pardon in the latter, vacillating, self-distrustful and professedly indolent, who, with much show of reason, could always plead pulmonary trouble as a reason for quitting office and escaping care and responsibility. However, it should not be overlooked that Montague was far less advantageously placed to disarm criticism. Possessed of great wealth and twelfth holder of an illustrious earldom, Shrewsbury, whose personal charm, despite the handicap of having only one serviceable eye, was considerable, exacted from his intensely snobbish society a measure of consideration and esteem that was denied the other, who, being only the fourth son of an Earl's younger son, and that Earl a fairly recent creation, was dubbed by the old aristocracy an " upstart ", a form of belittlement presupposing some lack of poise.

Selling himself to a rich wife of sixty was the worst form of introduction Montague could have had to the exclusive Whig society in which, in after-years, he sought a dominating position, nor was it any better advertisement for him that, deprived of the benefit of her income [this went to her son, the future 1st Duke of Manchester], he should, in order to recoup himself, seize hold of the lucrative Auditorship of the Exchequer.

In statecraft, as in Parliamentary skill, Montague was head and shoulders above his predatory cousin, Ralph Montagu, but in such virile qualities as cool nerve, venturesomeness, indifference to criticism and an almost Elizabethan passion for living dangerously, he fell far below him. Nor can it be forgotten that the older man, even though it was for the purposes of gain or private revenge, was never afraid to put both his life and fortune to the hazard. Whatever the younger Charles Montague may have been, and the indications are that he was bold, enterprising and accessible to innovation, the middle-aged Charles Montague, his character adversely affected by loss of power and popularity, was little of a hero. He refused to jeopardise his sinecure, declining such public service as was incompatible with its retention. Only if the highest office in the State, that of Treasurer or Prime Minister, for which he considered himself eminently fitted, were within his reach, would he withdraw from the Auditorship, and then only on condition that he was succeeded by his brother or nephew.

This reluctance to forsake the dividends of safe, dependable courses supplied the clue to much in his life that was otherwise inexplicable. Not only did it influence his public career, but it exercised a marked, perhaps a decisive, effect on his private life. In politics it contributed to his long exclusion from high office even when the Whigs resumed power; in his personal relations it meant forgoing marriage with possibly the only woman

[1] *History of the Tory Party*, 1640–1714, by Dr. Keith Feiling.

for whom he cherished any deep affection, certainly the one best fitted to make him happy, as well as depriving him of the possibility of an heir of his own flesh and blood.

Such is the inconsistency of human nature that, presently, he was found condemning in others that very timidity which was his own greatest weakness. In the summer of 1705, rebuking Shrewsbury for refusing to leave Rome [where he was pursuing the unedifying existence of a rich idler], and re-engage in the party struggle, Montague, now Lord Halifax, wrote, "I always thought there was too much fine silver in your Grace's temperament. Had you been made of a coarse alloy, you had been better for public use. Your mind is too tender; you lay too much weight on the rude, unmannerly behaviour everybody meets with in England, and you suffer too much from the idle, ill-natured stories you hear."

Broad must have been Shrewsbury's smile when he received this letter. He knew Montague's faults as well as he knew his own, and devastating would have been his answer had he thought it worth while troubling. At this period he was still a convert to the pessimistic view aired in his letter of January 17th, 1701, to Somers, "Had I a son, I would sooner breed him a cobbler than a courtier, and a hangman than a statesman." For all that, in a few years' time he would be back at court and active politics, so compelling, despite all its drudgery, rebuffs and humiliations, was the call of public life, and so dreadfully boring in comparison was an existence divorced from tension and stress, exultation and despondency. Like Montague, though in a less pronounced degree, he was to find that relinquishing office for the sake of tranquillity was like swallowing an opiate which, when the immediate effect had worn off, left the patient more restless than before.

In Charles Montague, whose character bristles with contradictions and inconsistencies, Macaulay found an admirable subject for his colourful pen, one pre-eminently lending itself to those picturesque and dramatic flights of rhetoric in which he excelled. Unfortunately, his incomplete history was insufficiently advanced to allow adequate treatment of Montague's long absence from Ministerial office, and not taken far enough to catch up with the statesman's romantic interlude with Catharine Barton, the witty and fascinating niece of Montague's lifelong friend, Sir Isaac Newton, though, as will be shown in a succeeding chapter, he could not resist the temptation of challenging by letter the assumption of Professor Augustus de Morgan, the celebrated nineteenth-century mathematician, that the pair had been secretly married.

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Before Montague's life is dealt with in detail, it may be both appropriate and profitable to dwell for a moment or two on that other bewildering mystery, the astonishing loss of popularity which preceded his eclipse, truly remarkable when contrasted with his previous command of the House of Commons, of which he was the recognised leader. He, whose confident and ringing accents once charmed and subdued this rebellious assembly, found himself impotent to impress an impatient and hostile conclave

obedient to other masters. Ralph Montagu, fully deserving of the contempt and enmity of his fellow M.P.s, never seems to have been troubled by a comparable exhibition of ill-will. Most historians, taking their cue from contemporary observers, attribute the changed attitude towards Charles Montague to resentment of his vanity and haughty manner, product of an all-too-quick rise to power, and not a little to jealousy of his consistently good fortune. "Envy," remarks Bolingbroke, a sufferer from the same deplorable manifestation of human nature, "is always near the great to fling up their heels at the least trip they make." But in themselves, vanity and pompousness, even if as pronounced as his foes asserted, would have been insufficient to account for Montague's fall in esteem. Other factors contributed to his unpopularity, notably the sedulously canvassed suggestion that he had taken undue advantage of his position and opportunities to grow rich; the subterranean campaign of disparagement pursued by his treacherous colleague, Sunderland, who undoubtedly inspired the charges of peculation and fed the lust for revenge nourished by his political enemies, still smarting from the snubs administered to them when he commanded a majority in the House.

To a considerable extent Montague suffered by reason of the temporary power he enjoyed under William III., whose policy he mostly endorsed, and by whose misguided generosity at the public expense, he, as was the custom of the day, liberally benefited. His financial measures placed England in a position to finance the life-and-death struggle with Louis XIV., but his opponents, the Tory squires, groaning under the heavy taxation—4s. in the £ on land—thought more of the heavy burdens he had imposed on them than of the danger of a Europe entirely dominated by France, from which those measures were designed to save us. But then gratitude was never a feature of English politics.

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Charles Montague was the fourth son of George Montague (a younger son of the 1st Earl of Manchester), and was born on April 16th, 1661, at the pretty Northamptonshire village of Horton, four miles from Olney, famed for its association with Cowper, the poet. His London home was Manchester House,[1] Channel [now Cannon] Row, at the Derby Street corner of Westminster. Both he and his brother, Sir James Montague, the future Lord Chief Baron, were friendly with Matthew Prior, whose uncle, Samuel Prior, kept the Rhenish wine house "of good resort" opposite:

> What wretch would nibble on a hanging-shelf,
> When at Pontack's he may regale himself ?
> Or to the house of cleanly R[h]enish go,
> Or that at Charing Cross, or that in Channel-Row ?[2]

All three went first to Westminster School to be taught wisdom and discipline under the great Dr. Richard Busby, who never spared the rod, and later to Cambridge, the two brothers to Trinity and Prior to St. John's adjoining. The lettered Earl of Dorset, early lover of Nell Gwyn, who, from

[1] Later the site of the Civil Service Commission building.
[2] *The Country-Mouse and the City-Mouse.*

seeing Prior with a Horace in his hand and well able to turn a Latin ode into passable English metre, had included him in his universal patronage, had wanted Matt to go to Oxford, but the youth, unwilling to be separated from his boyhood friends, followed them to Cambridge.

At Trinity, which was a royal foundation, Montague was among the young men to pay poetical tribute to Charles II., whose real character he was only later to understand. Of the fulsome flattery these four lines were technically the best:

> Farewell, great Charles, monarch of blest renown,
> The best good man that ever fill'd a throne,
> Whom nature, as her highest pattern, wrought,
> And mixed both sexes virtues in one draught.

Dorset and the companion of his raffish frolics, Sir Charles Sedley, thought the stuff good and introduced the young man to their fellow-wits. In this nest of singing birds he was extravagantly praised. Admirers went so far as to say of him that,

> So well he shar'd the character he writ,
> The gentlest manners and the strongest wit.

Back at Trinity, happily enough, he fell under the influence of Isaac Newton, who for twelve years had been Lucasian Professor, contact with that superlative genius broadening his mind and developing his intellect. Their joint effort to establish a philosophical society at Cambridge was, however, not a success. As a variant to his philosophic studies he practised Pindaric odes, though mainly occupied in the effort to secure a fellowship preparatory to taking holy orders, the profession to which poverty drove many unenthusiastic scions of the nobility not at all cut out for such a vocation.

Chance was partly responsible for the moderately clever parody which was to bring Montague and Prior prominently before the public. Dryden, commemorating his entry into the Church of Rome, had published an allegory, " The Hind and the Panther ", proclaiming the superior virtues of his new faith.[1] A copy, lying conspicuously on the table in the Middle Temple chambers of Sir James Montague, attracted the attention of his brother Charles, who while perusing it was joined by Prior. Turning to his friend, Charles, with unfeigned dissent, read the first four lines:

> A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchanged,
> Fed on the lawns, and o'er the forest ranged,
> Without unspotted, innocent within,
> She feared no danger for she knew no sin.

How foolish, he protested, to commend a four-footed beast for not being guilty of sin! They would answer it with an adaptation of Horace's fable of the City Mouse and the Country Mouse. Prior, agreeing, quickly produced this parody of the lines he had just heard:

> A milk-white mouse, immortal and unchanged,
> Fed on soft cheese, and o'er the dairy ranged.
> Without unspotted, innocent within,
> She feared no danger for she knew no gin.

[1] A milk-white hind (Church of Rome) invites a spotted panther (Church of England) to its cave, there to dispute the nice points of religion.

Montague added the next four lines, and with each in turn taking a hand, the composition was soon finished. The Town voted the authors bright young men. Dryden was disgusted at the impertinence of these youngsters, but to say, as did one scribe of the period, that it reduced him to tears was to underrate the great man's self-possession. More than a *jeu d'esprit* fathered by two unknown young men was required to disturb the phlegm of the snuff-soothed oracle of Will's coffee-house. Conscious as they were of his greatness, neither would have wished to cause the poet-laureate pain, and at his death, Montague, then Lord Halifax, to show that no ill-feeling was ever intended by the burlesque, shared with Dorset the cost of a monument to him in Westminster Abbey.

Curiously enough, had not second thoughts prevailed, Montague would have prefaced the sly dig at Dryden by one at Sir Charles Sedley, a display of ingratitude which must have done him incalculable harm. He got as far as writing nearly the whole of a satire intended to burlesque the sickbed repentance and conversion of this riotous-living courtier, whose last public exploit had been a drunken and obscene caper shared by Dorset and Sir Thomas Ogle. While in a complete state of nudity, he had mounted the balcony of the Cock Tavern kept by Oxford Kate, and there preached a mock sermon which was so little to the liking of the scandalised mob that they stoned him. The theme appealed to a young poet who prided himself on his wit, and one has only to study the MS., now owned by the British Museum, to realise with what gusto Montague attacked his subject. "The profane conclusion drawn by the satirist," says Dr. V. de Sola Pinto, to whose scholarly life of Sedley we owe the unearthing of the unfinished poem, "is that Sedley learned to believe in the mystery of the Trinity . . . from watching the Romney smugglers [he was M.P. for New Romney] squeeze their fleeces into one in order to cheat the Customs. In a squib like this something must, of course, be allowed for the exaggeration of a satirist. Sedley's conversion did not prevent him from writing . . . an excellent (but by no means edifying) comedy in 1687."

Montague, alert and industrious, turned his newly-gained notoriety to profitable use, but Prior, careless, easy-going, and much given to wenching, benefited little from the publicity. Irked at what he considered the uneven distribution of favours, he addressed himself in this mildly protesting vein to Dorset:

> My friend Charles Montague's preferr'd,
> Nor would I have it long observ'd,
> That one mouse eats, while t'other's starv'd.[1]

Prior, modestly understating his part in the burlesque of Dryden, declared that he had little to say otherwise than as he held the pen to what Mr. Montague dictated. Lord Peterborough, according to Spence, the anecdotist, took the opposite view, remarking Mr. Montague wrote the *Country Mouse* with Prior, "just as if I was in the chaise with Mr. Cheselden here, drawn by his fine horse, and should say, 'Lord, how finely we draw this chaise!'" The account given by Sir James Montague is the more likely to be true,

[1] *An epistle* : To Fleetwood Shepherd Esqre. (a friend of Dorset).

since he was present when the parody was being written. He insisted that Montague and Prior had an equal hand in it.

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Finding himself a celebrity of a sort, Montague felt that he ought to aspire to greater heights than those to be reached, via the Church. But first he had to be financially secure, and to that end, being then twenty-seven, wedded Anne, the sexagenarian widow of Robert, 3rd Earl of Manchester, whose jointure of £1,500 a year made up for numerous deficiencies in the way of looks and charm. Taking on rich widows might be said to be a family weakness, but as a rule the Montagues liked them both young and attractive. Ralph Montagu, for example, in marrying the Countess of Northumberland, captured a great beauty and a handsome fortune.

For a while the young bridegroom had to put up with sneers and jibes. He was charged with entering public life under the tutelage of a venerable matron, who, to suit the rôle of a young man's wife, was said to be skipping briskly. Society was convinced that the union was purely one of convenience, and it was taken for granted that, somewhere in the background, was a conveniently-minded woman friend nearer his own age.

The wits might poke fun at Montague for marrying purely for money, but there was nothing exceptional in what he had done. Every penniless younger son of a peer, every needy hanger-on at court, every improvident aristocrat, was in search either of a rich ward or a wealthy widow, in the latter case regardless of age. When bordering on eighty, Col. Ludlow's widow inherited a fortune; whereupon that acute observer, the Countess of Rutland, prophesied that soon the sparks would be hovering round her, as though she were young and beautiful. John Sheffield, Marquis of Normanby and Duke of Buckingham, who addressed the Princess Anne as lover, showed what he thought of widows by marrying three in turn. Nearer our own day, Disraeli invited criticism by marrying sprightly Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, who was forty-four, for her money, but, after all, she was only twelve years his senior, scarcely looked her age, and adored him: whereas a gulf of thirty-three years separated Charles Montague and his wife, who can have had little in common.

Thanks to his wife's money, as well as his own ability, Montague rapidly forged ahead. Having signed the letter of invitation to the Prince of Orange and associated himself with the Northamptonshire rising in that Prince's favour, he was in January, 1687, through Dorset's influence, chosen to represent Maldon in the Convention Parliament, where he was to meet Newton. In order not to be thought entirely dependent on his wife, he bought, as already stated, a clerkship to the Council. Later, according to the gossip-writers, Dorset, then Lord Chamberlain, presented him to King William with the remark that here was a mouse desirous of kissing His Majesty's hand, to which the king rejoined, "we must make a man of him", and forthwith allotted him £500 a year from the Privy Purse. It is a pleasant enough story, which need not be taken too seriously. Had any such thing happened, we were bound to hear of it when Montague was being pilloried for extorting various grants from the king.

[*By permission of the National Portrait Gallery*

CHARLES, 1ST EARL OF HALIFAX
(After the portrait by Kneller)

[*By permission of the National Portrait Gallery*

ROBERT HARLEY, 1ST EARL OF OXFORD AND MORTIMER
(After the portrait by Kneller)

In taking up politics as his profession, Montague was obeying a natural call. He was a born administrator and had, besides, all the qualities which made for political success. As a debater he had few equals, being clear in exposition, sound and logical in argument, painstaking and systematic in the preparation and presentation of his case. He and Lord Somers ranked as the finest orators in the Whig party. In style he was quite unlike Bolingbroke, who in the Commons relied on fiery and unrestrained invective, of which he was a consummate master, coupled with passionate rhetoric, to impress the Assembly, only to find when he was translated to the Upper House that the quieter methods of his inveterate foe, Montague, were so much more effective. Bolingbroke overawed and dazzled where Montague persuaded. That was the essential difference between the two, plus that indefinable suggestion of erratic genius which, throughout his chequered career, was to cling to the Tory leader and help to build up the vast Bolingbroke myth.

Such speeches of Montague as have survived fully repay perusal. They are distinguished not only by clarity of thought and close-knit argument, but by a wealth of historical examples garnered from voluminous reading, or supplied by Somers, main author of *The Declaration of Rights*, "that immortal bill" as Edmund Burke termed it. In him the spirit of his lawyer ancestors, remarkable for their lucid reasoning power and grasp of essential facts, seemed to have taken fresh root. Had Montague added to his qualities the insouciance and unruffled demeanour of Harley, his formidable rival and later his would-be ally, he would have been a great man indeed. There was little of the demagogue about him. He had none of the popular arts which made his colleague, the Marquis of Wharton, who knew many of the electors by their Christian names, such a tremendous force in the constituencies. He addressed himself not to the passions and prejudices of his auditors, but to their intelligence. He sought to win them over rather by sheer force of logic than by florid rhetoric.

When, standing on his toes so as to appear less diminutive, his strong chin thrust aggressively forward at a conspicuous angle, the little fair man with the big head addressed the Commons, he could always be sure of a most attentive, indeed a rapt, audience. As a Parliamentarian he was remarkable for his knowledge of procedure and forms. Also he was thoroughly conversant with the historic rights and privileges of each Chamber, a valuable asset having regard to the jealousy with which, in his day, the one assembly watched the other for possible encroachments. Due recognition of his merit came with his appointment as Chairman of the Commons' Committee, which in agreement with the Lords proposed amending the practice of the Courts in treason charges. Here, coming up against such giants as Halifax *The Trimmer*, Rochester [son of the great Clarendon] and Nottingham the incorruptible, he more than held his own.

In those early years as M.P. he showed tremendous alertness, missing few chances. Such was his resourcefulness of character that even passing weaknesses were turned to good account. Urging the necessity of counsel for prisoners in treason trials, he suddenly came to a full stop, having lost the thread of his argument. When he recovered, he remarked, "If I, used to

public speaking, can sometimes be thrown into confusion, what must be the bewilderment of these poor prisoners when called upon to address their judges?" It was contended, quite erroneously, that the oratorical device had previously been employed by Shaftesbury, but even had that been the case, its success on this later occasion amply vindicated its use.

More particularly Montague shone in financial discussions, his speeches being addressed to the strengthening of the national credit by much-needed reforms. His recommendations were characterized by shrewd commonsense, ready grasp of figures and not infrequent flashes of intuition. On March 21st, 1692, he was nominated a Lord of the Treasury, a tribute to the mastery he had shown of all financial issues. Any reluctance the king might have had to including him in the government was overcome by Dorset's strong representations on his behalf.

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For the next seven years it would be Montague's task to overhaul, repair and broaden the machinery of national credit, so as to enable it to cope with the burdens and requirements of a war, as well as a peace, economy. The new financial system which, helped by the advice and support of Somers, Newton and Locke the philosopher, he was to initiate, was equivalent almost to a revolution in ideas and methods. Its main features were the National Debt, the Bank of England, and paper credit represented by Exchequer Bills, all measures vital to the orderly process of economically defensible public borrowing, the funding of a proportion of the abnormal debt caused by war charges, the provision for the Government of cash at fair rates of interest and the issue, complete with recognisable safeguards, of paper money redeemable from the produce of future taxes.

Prior to Montague's reforms a primitive system of banking and investment prevailed. The ever-growing surplus wealth of the country, due to the rise in national prosperity, when not lodged with private bankers or with goldsmiths who acted as bankers, was poured into speculative ventures such as trading companies. The goldsmiths paid 6 per cent on all capital deposited with them, and re-loaned it at a profit of 2 per cent or more, the rate varying with the repute and stability of the borrower. Their strong rooms bulged with specie, jewels and plate. A few of the more nervous-minded citizens, following the example of Pepys, buried their treasure in their gardens, or, like Pope's father, kept it in strong boxes in their homes.

Having faith in the royal promise to repay, the goldsmiths made over to the Crown a large part of the money deposited with them, the loans being secured by existing or prospective sources of revenue. The system worked so long as there was no default, a contingency always to be apprehended in view of the insolvent state of the Government, due to a succession of unbalanced budgets. The improvidence of Charles II., combined with the niggardliness of the Parliamentary grants, largely occasioned by distrust of his motives, forced up borrowing rates, which in turn rendered the task of discharging the burden of debt well-nigh insuperable. To prevent a default, the bankers had to continue bolstering up the Treasury with fresh supplies of money.

But towards the end of 1671, with Louis's hosts on the march, and Charles II. agreeing to co-operate with him, the bankers, to whom the Government already owed a million pounds, took fright and refused to put up any more cash. Charles retaliated by temporarily suspending interest payments on a part of the loan and using the money saved for his immediate needs, thereafter relying on French subsidies to make ends meet. The Exchequer stop, as it was called, was a suspension, not a repudiation, and at a later date interest payments were resumed. But the damage done to the National Credit was incapable of quick repair. Its effects were felt by William, faced with the tremendous problem of financing the struggle with France. To raise sufficient money to carry on even for strictly limited periods was as much as he could do, even though the peril in which the country stood must have been clear to the majority of the wealthy citizens.

William had many good points, but financial ability was not among them, and though he did not oppose Montague's reforms, he gave little evidence of being impressed by their worth. Yet some of his countrymen, used to the efficient banking system in Holland, with borrowing rates as low as 3 per cent, or a third of what was charged in England, must have realised that, for the first time, England was blessed with a financial controller whose skill matched his opportunities. To begin with, Montague experimented with makeshift expedients, such as offering to pay subscribers to a great loan annuities for a stated number of years, secured by new duties on beer and other liquors. His bag-o'-tricks included reorganisation of the Land Tax, fixed for the year 1693 at 4s. in the £, which added two millions to the National Exchequer (an immense gain), Poll Tax, Stamp Duties and Lottery Loans.

Only when he had exhausted their usefulness and proved to his own and the country's satisfaction that bolder and more comprehensive measures were needed, did he seriously apply himself to the task of overhauling and remodelling the whole system of national credit. The day of hand-to-mouth finance, which had been made to serve so long, was finished—so much was clear to him, if it had still to sink into the consciousness of his political opponents. All issues, political and financial, being the prey of faction, he had to struggle hard to get his way. In giving his blessing to the Bank of England project, and fighting tooth and nail to persuade a dubious and critical House of Commons that it was directed to the common good, even if financed by Whig magnates, he earned, even if he did not receive, the nation's gratitude.

Not that it was his idea, any more than Exchequer Bills, or the creation of a new East India Company, the last of his financial triumphs. Like Shakespeare, he did not disdain to borrow from others, but what he borrowed he improved beyond recognition. He took William Paterson's scheme for a National Bank and made it practical politics, and he did the same with the ideas of Thomas Neale, Master of the Mint, and Sir Gilbert Heathcote, the banker, the one concerned with Exchequer Bills, the other with a new trading company to the East Indies. Having a keen, receptive mind, he learned from trial and error, but what proved his greatest source of strength was his thorough understanding of the conditions of public credit, combined with a

clear conception of the machinery needed for mercantile prosperity. Thorold Rogers goes so far as to describe him as the first Finance Minister England ever had.

In his admirable *History of the Bank of England*, Sir John Clapham argues that the establishment of the Bank was curiously accidental. Had the country not been at war in 1694, the Government would hardly have been disposed to offer a favourable charter to a corporation which proposed to lend it money. Had Montague, a Lord of the Treasury, not thought that out of the several scores of financial schemes submitted to him, this was on the whole the most promising, there would again have been no charter, or perhaps quite a different one.

To agree with the famous economist is to endorse Professor J. B. Bury's doctrine of the contingency of history, the doctrine that " history is determined not by general, rational and predictable causes, but by a chapter of accidents ". But in the creation of the Bank of England there were surely other factors than the contingency of war, or the element of individuality represented by Montague's liking for the project. New ideas were knocking at the door. The general trend, quickened by the spread of more enlightened Continental views of finance, was all in the direction of a national bank. The infiltration of Dutch ideas, particularly in respect to commerce and finance, steadily gathered momentum. English merchants, strongly impressed by the astonishing success of the Bank of Amsterdam, which had come to occupy a unique position in the world of finance, had begun to agitate for similar provision in London. As they were the backbone of Whig support, their views naturally weighed with Montague; but so much did he share their views, that pressure on their part was scarcely necessary.

When the scheme for a national bank was launched, those clear-sighted Whig merchants showed their faith in it by subscribing the greater part of the capital, £1,200,000, all of which was forthcoming within ten days. Montague put his name down for £2,000 of stock, Godolphin for £7,000 and Marlborough and Shrewsbury for £10,000 each.[1] Other notable subscribers were Thomas Guy, founder of Guy's Hospital, Sir Godfrey Kneller, the painter, and, among lesser folk, the father of Sir Cloudesley Shovell.[2]

The Whig magnates never varied in their belief in the ultimate success of the Bank, but the politicians, who had contributed to the capital, were less decided and some were out almost as soon as they were in. Certainly within two years almost every subscriber with any claim to political significance had disposed of his holding. Among the exceptions was probably Montague, who through nominees, a favourite device of his, may have increased his holdings and profited by the wide fluctuations in the price of the stock, which from being 60 in October, 1696, touched 98 on September 15th, 1697. If so, we have a clue to the origin of part at least of his wealth. Many insiders benefited substantially from the variations in price caused by the oscillations in public confidence. Anderson, author of the *History of Commerce* (quoted by Sir John Clapham) had " often heard it said by persons who lived at this time that Sir Gilbert Heathcote [repeatedly

[1] L'Hermitage, quoted in Churchill's *Marlborough*, Vol. I.
[2] *The Bank of England*, 1694–1944, by Reginald Saw.

Director and twice Governor of the Bank], gained by that rise of price about sixty thousand pounds ".

The Bank, which began business in August, 1694, issued its first notes in 1695, the amount and signature being written in by hand. It was not a case of success easily achieved. Many vicissitudes marked the new institution's evolution. Like its Parliamentary projector, Montague, the Bank had to learn its business the bitter way of experience. At times the strain on its resources was so great as to be wellnigh insupportable, largely the fault of advancing too much cash on government securities in anticipation of payment of taxes.

What worsened matters for the Bank was the feeling among the Tories that it was purely a Whig institution, and, to hear the Tory country squires talk, likely to depress the value of land. Harley, the Tory leader, made much of this feeling, but dismal failure crowned his unworthy attempt to counter the new institution with a land bank, which, it was claimed, would give an immense fillip to land values. The moneyed men preferred to trust the Bank already functioning, while the fanatical supporters of the new project, so far from dipping into their purses, never got beyond frothy words.

As an integral feature of his reforms, Montague who, since April 30th, 1694, had been Chancellor of the Exchequer, and since May 10th a Privy Councillor, set about replacing the debased currency, which involved the country in serious hardship, with silver money of standard weight and fineness, the heavy loss, with commendable honesty, to be borne by the Treasury. Owing to wear and chipping, so seriously had the silver coins in circulation depreciated in value that guineas sold for 30s. In his decision not to penalise the public by reducing the value of the new coins to that of the old debased metallic content, i.e., putting 8d. worth of silver into the shilling, Montague was supported by his colleague and intimate friend, Lord Keeper Somers, and both in turn by the reasoned plea of John Locke, whose treatise, *Further considerations concerning raising the value of money*, had stressed the iniquity of slimming the new coins in order to lighten the Treasury loss.

Those opposed to Montague's proposals argued that calling in the debased money would temporarily create great public inconvenience, since not for a considerable time could the Mint hope to catch up with the shortage. But, by a substantial majority, the House agreed that whatever hardship was suffered was likely to be small compared with the evil resulting from a continuance of the debased currency. Thereby they disposed of the specious plea of Harley and his fellow Tories that when England had on her hands a burdensome and doubtful war, it was foolish to provoke the people with fresh cause for grievance. From the one flaw in his proposals, raising the value of the guinea to 22s., Montague was saved by the superior wisdom of the Commons, which rejected it.

To help to defray the cost to the Treasury of substituting standard weight milled coins for the old debased currency, a tax upon window lights, calculated to raise £1,200,000 or rather more than a third of the loss, was imposed. Begun in 1695, the recoinage was completed by 1699, though not without some jarring complications. On the one hand, unscrupulous financiers taking

liberal advantage of unsuspected loopholes for dishonesty had the time of their lives; on the other, poor, illiterate folk, who because of their ignorance failed to unload their chipped money within the prescribed period, were involved in needless loss.

It is a fair assumption that had Parliament realised how great would be the cost to the nation of exchanging the new for the old money, they would scarcely have pretended to such virtue as wholly relieving the individual citizen of loss. Montague's failure to give the Commons this information formed no small part of the Tory case against him. Subsequent history, however, was thoroughly to justify all his reforms, if only by convincing Louis that England, served by a superior system of national credit, was unlikely to be hampered in her war effort because of straitened finances.

His triumph would have been still more impressive had the start of the recoinage operation been accompanied by the issue of paper money to bridge the gap in the currency. Unfortunately, the expedient was delayed until July, 1696,[1] when, partly owing to the shortage of ready money, the credit of the Government fell to such a low level as to raise the spectre of general bankruptcy. Despite the high rate of interest, issues based on public securities were under a cloud. Tallies on the Exchequer fell to 30 per cent and 60 per cent discount and banknotes to 20 per cent.

But with the issue by Montague of Exchequer Bills of £5 and £10 denomination, to the amount of two million pounds, a novel experiment in political economy, confidence slowly revived, and when the Treaty of Ryswick brought the war to a halt, the change in tone became even more marked. Declared legal tender for the payment of taxes, Exchequer Bills took a sudden leap in popularity and, from a discount of a 100 per cent compared with the metallic currency, improved to equality and then to a premium.

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Though his appointment as one of the Lords Justices or Regents during the king's absence abroad was not gazetted until July, 1698, the high-water mark in his career of success could be said to be reached on May 1st, 1697, for then he became First Lord of the Treasury, in addition to being Chancellor of the Exchequer. In the last months of his life, after being out of Ministerial office for fifteen years, he was once more summoned to be head of the Treasury, but nothing like the same power and authority were conceded him, nor were the conditions so propitious. In the summer of 1697, Somers having gone to the Lords, he was not only Leader of the House of Commons, but virtually Prime Minister. True, there had been a bit of a tussle before he got his Treasury promotion. Godolphin, whose place he had taken, had resigned some six months previously, but the king had been uncertain whether to promote Montague or his fellow M.P. for Westminster, the veteran Sir Stephen Fox, to whom he was particularly partial. Eventually Fox agreed to withdraw his candidature on condition of it being publicly announced that he had been offered and had declined the position. As this would have constituted an unwarrantable affront to Montague, it was

[1] The Recoinage Bill became law, January 21st, 1696.

decided that the fairest course all round would be not to gazette his appointment.[1]

If the none too reliable gossip of the period is to be believed, Montague began to display a great falling off in tact and discretion. He was accused of giving himself important airs,[2] and because of his small stature and perky ways became an easy target for the scoffer. His enemies, actuated by envy and jealousy, increasingly dwelt on what they termed his phenomenal luck.[3] Comment centred on the extent to which his expanding prosperity was reflected in a style of living quite out of keeping with the straitened times. To his rabid critics he was still the upstart, the young man who had entered into a sordid, loveless marriage, and but ten years previously had been glad of a modest Clerkship of the Council. His success was particularly distasteful to those lukewarm Whigs whom fortune had not favoured, and they were only too delighted to join the Tories in harrying him. Under the lead of these unnatural allies, the House strove to reassert its independence of the Government and to revive the old practice of baiting Ministers. Not without good cause Montague suspected Sunderland, now Lord Chamberlain,[4] of aiding and abetting the policy of pinpricks.

By his reliance on this supremely clever but thoroughly unscrupulous statesman, King William made the position of his colleagues in the Ministry extremely uncomfortable. Knowing Sunderland of old, they suspected him of being behind every attempt of the monarch to disregard their wishes. As early as August, 1696, that gallant but obstreperous sailor, Edward Russell, Earl of Orford, irked by Sunderland's behaviour, felt impelled to remark to his friend Shrewsbury: " It is an old saying, ' when the fox is abroad look to your lambs '. No man is ever secure from his [Sunderland's] tricks, but he can play none very prejudicial, if he be not too much trusted and relied upon."

Sunderland, for example, pretended to favour the appointment of Wharton as Secretary of State, while agreeing with the king that he ought not to be saddled with such a dictatorial, truculent and overbearing Minister. His objection to Montague was due plainly to pique. The brilliant young statesman owed his position not to the fluctuating favour of the king, but to his command over the Commons; hence was under no obligation to Sunderland who, as intermediary between His Majesty and the Cabinet, claimed to exercise a decisive influence. This was very upsetting to the haughty Earl, well-disposed only to those ready to accept his patronage, or in some way beholden to him.

So far from Montague being deferential, he had the audacity to quarrel with Sunderland and in the very presence of the king, who, siding with his

[1] Macaulay's *History of England*, Chapter XXI.

[2] Tindal, the historian: " 1698. Montague in the Commons had gained such a visible ascendant over all who were zealous for the king's service that he gave the law to the rest, which he did always with good spirit, but sometimes with too assuming an air."

[3] From an oration by Pericles: " Men can endure to hear others praised so long as they can severally persuade themselves of their own ability to equal the actions recounted; when this point is passed envy comes in, and with it incredulity." —Thuc. II, 35.

[4] Appointed April 19th, 1697, in succession to Dorset, who had resigned.

favourite, angrily bade the younger man seek his pardon. Montague obeyed with a very saucy air, remarking he was doing what he had been commanded, to which Sunderland retorted that, not having been commanded to accept Montague's apology, he did not do so. However, on Montague mending his manner, peace, or what purported to be peace, was restored.[1]

Nothing in the situation was changed. On Sir William Trumbull suddenly resigning his Secretaryship of State, Sunderland cajoled the reluctant, mild-mannered James Vernon into accepting the position, though well aware that the Whig Cabinet were intent on Wharton's preferment. Rightly indignant, they took no steps to protect Sunderland when he was assailed in Parliament as the corrupt and secret adviser of his royal master, bent on betraying and ruining him as he had previously betrayed and ruined James II. Equally they were silent when an address to the king to remove the obnoxious favourite from his presence and Council was threatened. Though William interceded with the Whigs on his behalf, the tension remained just as acute. Terrified of being impeached, Sunderland resigned, declaring that he could no longer bear the coarse usage he had to expect from the Commons. To Vernon he remarked in parting that he had led the life of a dog, having done all he could to serve a party whom he could never persuade to live easily with him, or even treat him with common civility.

The Whigs were delighted. At the dissolution they counted on being all the stronger for no longer being identified with so unpopular a royal favourite as the fallen Minister. No one doubted who pulled the strings when Sir Charles Duncombe, the City banker credited with being the richest commoner in England, imputed to Montague and the Treasury grave irregularities in respect to Exchequer Bills. To Sunderland, a close personal friend, the banker owed the Receivership of the Excise from which he had been brusquely ejected by Montague. Along with Sir John Trevor, Master of the Rolls, and formerly Speaker, but expelled from the House for accepting a bribe, and Henry Guy, until February, 1695, Secretary to the Treasury, when he was kicked out for similar corruption, Duncombe was pleased to be a satellite of Sunderland's, eager and ready to perform his dirty work. But in Montague all three met their match, Guy being promptly silenced by threats of further exposure, and Duncombe neatly confounded by being proved on his confession dishonest.

Duncombe's charges had led to a full inquiry into Treasury transactions. While Montague was completely exculpated, any irregularities being traceable to minor subordinates, Duncombe in cross-examination had to admit being a party to fraud in the same connection. As punishment he was ordered to pay a fine of half his £400,000 estate, the money to go to the relief of the National Exchequer, which he had so coolly robbed. In the Lords, thanks mainly to the agency of that master of corruption, the Duke of Leeds, who realized that Duncombe's real crime was to be found out, the Bill of pains and penalties was rejected by one vote.

Dr. Keith Feiling[2] argues that their action was justified, as a small party

[1] A report of the incident is to be found in Lord Dartmouth's note to Burnet's *History of his Own Time.*

[2] *History of the Tory Party.*

majority had usurped the judicial function. His further assertion that the fine was ridiculously disproportionate to the crime is less easy of acceptance. A more apt comment would be that under the Bill of Rights excessive fines were forbidden, in order to prevent political persecution. In Duncombe's case a heavy fine was clearly called for. Unless checked by the deterrent penalties demanded by Montague, corruption and dishonesty in the public service threatened to reach formidable proportions. Too many courtiers, placemen and politicians were earnestly taking to heart Iago's admonition to Roderigo, "Put money in thy purse . . . make all the money thou canst." Fortified by the comfortable assurance that to feather one's nest was among the unwritten commandments, highly-placed persons were actively engaged in taking bribes, undeterred by any sense of degradation, and incapable of the saving grace of self-reproach.

From the exposure in 1695 of the £90,000 spent in bribery by the East India Company to ensure the renewal of its Charter, both the Duke of Leeds and the redoubtable Tory champion, Sir Edward Seymour, had emerged with their characters besmirched. Leeds, old in the business of giving and taking bribes, had pocketed what was for him the ridiculously small gratuity of 5,000 guineas, token of failing power rather than diminished appetite, and had not the chief witness for the prosecution conveniently disappeared, the Duke might well have renewed his acquaintance with the Tower.[1]

Seymour professed to see the hand of Montague in the prosecution, and swore to be revenged, though, hiding his feelings, he dined with him. On his party protesting, he threatened to repeat the offence the following day.

With morality in certain quarters at such a low ebb, it was pleasant to come across men of lofty position who still regarded the taking of bribes as dishonourable—men like Finch, Earl of Nottingham, who rejected a *douceur* of £10,000 proffered by this rich corporation, and like the Earl of Portland who, despite his greed for rich Crown manors, spurned the offer of £50,000 from the same source, though his scrupulous attitude did not protect him from slanderous imputation. "It is hard," said the Earl, quoting in his defence the Spanish proverb, "to be beaten with the spit when you have not eaten the roast!"

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Greatly heartened by the unexpected result of the Duncombe affair, Montague's enemies sought to take him at a disadvantage. They had discovered that he was the real beneficiary of a grant of fines and forfeitures amounting to some £12,000, which stood in the name of one Thomas Railton, and in February, 1698, without any warning, savagely challenged his conduct in the matter. Instead of equivocating, he readily admitted that the grant was for his benefit, and so eloquently and effectively defended his acceptance of it, that the Commons, having first rejected a motion that he should withdraw from the House, proceeded by a large majority to declare him richly deserving of His Majesty's favour, a vote probably unprecedented

[1] *Vide* Chapter IV.

in British history. Exultantly Montague poured out his feelings to Shrewsbury, forgetting that this strange, enigmatical person was above being enthused by any sort of tidings. "The malice of my enemies," he wrote [January 18th, 1698], "has been very remarkable, but I can assure you it has not given me one unquiet hour, and before many days are past you will hear that I have carried the war into their own country."

Such talk plainly indicated that Montague was gravely underestimating not only the determination and malignity of his enemies, but the strength of the pending Tory reaction. Shrewsbury, who, though nominally Secretary of State, kept away from London, diagnosed the position more accurately, and was far from sharing Montague's sanguine outlook. He recommended healing the breach with Sunderland, with whom to a large extent he sympathised, and thus ending the internal feuds which were sapping the party's strength. Better than anyone he knew that at the first sign of Whig influence declining, the king, forgetting his debt to the authors of the Revolution, would, in the rightful discharge of his duty and prerogative, hasten to give the Cabinet a Tory complexion. Hence his advice to Montague was to consider the public and his own interest before any private resentment, and especially to take care not to alienate the king by fostering the belief that "the Whigs had a natural sourness that made them not to be lived with". In a way it was a personal dig at Montague, who had not a conciliatory manner, and fanned rather than mollified hostility by his defiant manner, not being built to conform to Bacon's dictum that the architect of his own fortunes must make his mind pliant and obedient to occasion.

Either at this juncture he was too complaisant to take hints, or, what is more probable, he attributed Shrewsbury's moderating counsel to a characteristic bout of nerves, for when next he wrote the Duke, which was in ten days' time, he sounded the same vengeful note: Duncombe's fall would cripple Sunderland's power to play tricks. He was the cement that kept . . . the Tories united. He was the Iago of the whole villainy, and nothing but his busy temper could keep them together.

As an indictment of Sunderland, it was magnificent, but from the point of view of expediency a grave mistake. Soon the Whig leaders, conscious of slipping with the king, would have nothing but smiles for the man in whose company William confessed he always felt at ease. Unprincipled and treacherous, Sunderland still had his uses. Sharing with Shrewsbury the rôle of His Majesty's chief adviser, he could influence the king in ways not open to others. It would have been better for all concerned had Shrewsbury remained on the scene and tactfully adjusted matters, but he stayed in Worcestershire, deaf to Sunderland's suggestion [September 16th, 1697], that the air of Chelsea or Hyde Park was equally as good.

When Montague spoke of carrying the war into the enemy's own camp, he meant launching his parliamentary new East India Company, in opposition to the Tory-supported old company, which owed its existence to a patent derived from the Crown. He proposed affirming the principle that Parliament alone could grant joint stock companies a monopoly of trade. The fact that the new company was prepared to lend the Treasury two millions at 8 per cent, as against £700,000 offered by the old company, was

largely responsible for the successful passage through both Houses of the enabling Bill, notwithstanding the fiercest opposition. Montague's speech in support of the new company must be reckoned among the most effective of his career. The eleventh-hour offer of a loan of two millions by the old company he characterised as a slim device to gain time, so that the Bill before Parliament might be choked.

Such was the rush of subscriptions that in three days the list was closed, all the money having been found. The king's name headed the list, but the £10,000 ascribed to him had actually been put up by the Treasury. That he held £7,000 stock in the old company was without special significance. Given originally to James when king, it had by decree of the Court of Exchequer been later transferred to his successors, William and Mary. Montague subscribed £5,000[1] and must have made a handsome profit on his investment.[2]

Elated by his extraordinary triumph, Montague boasted of his enemies' confusion. Writing to Shrewsbury [July 16th, 1698], he crowed over the mortification suffered by Sunderland, whose sympathies had lain with the Opposition. Nothing the wit or malice of his enemies could devise had caused the project to be modified one iota. They were now possibly free for ever from Sunderland, a fire-ship dangerous at best, but even more dangerous as consort than when showing hostile colours ; under which declaration he, personally, did not fear him. He might have been less jubilant had he foreseen how unfavourable the election was to turn out for the party. His enemies had made skilful use of every argument calculated to intensify popular prejudice. In particular, they had singled him out as the author of all the troubles of which the country had cause to complain, notably the heavy burden of taxation, pointing out that he had grown rich while they had become poor. Furthermore, they had accused him of partiality and oppression in his treatment of the old East India Company, and of favouring Cromwellianism by supporting the king's demand for a large standing army.

This propaganda was rendered all the more effective by the monarch's growing unpopularity. His lavish grants to his Dutch favourites and, in particular, to his squinting dragon of a mistress, Elizabeth Villiers, Countess of Orkney, were said to be condoned by Montague and his Whig friends. Montague attributed the party's misfortunes to war taxes, but foresaw no great lightening of the burden, even with peacetime budgets. We had to look to our security, and with the crazy king of Spain nearing his end, the vexed question of the Spanish succession, directly related to the balance of power, was already throwing its shadow over Europe.

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Montague, at this stage, might have done well to confide in his shrewd and discerning cousin, Ralph Montagu, such an opportunity being provided by a meeting at Boughton of the Whig chiefs intent on ironing out party

[1] Report on India Office Records, 1890.

[2] Subsequently, by their joint efforts, Montague, Harley and Godolphin succeeded in uniting the two companies into one vigorous whole.

differences. For he was contemplating early retirement from Ministerial office. In order not to be too much the loser in income and status, he had firmly fixed his eye on a lucrative sinecure soon likely to fall vacant. Though a rich man, he had not reconciled himself to the loss of the jointure enjoyed by his wife, old Lady Manchester, who had died in July, 1698.

That so early in his career he should want to retire, even if only temporarily, from the field of battle was due to what can only be described as an inferiority complex. With the leadership of the Commons gone over to Harley, he no longer found the atmosphere of the House palatable, and feared that to remain facing the hostile majority would merely be to court humiliation. As it was, he felt it prudent to limit his speeches to a minimum, a novel rôle for one who had fiercely engaged in every debate. Moreover, he was none too sure of being returned at the next election. In the summer of 1698, he and Vernon had had all their work cut out to scrape through at Westminster, and the signs were that next time the struggle would be harder still.

That September, which still found him in his defeatist mood, Sir Robert Howard, Auditor of the Exchequer, died. Brother-in-law of Dryden and himself a poet of sorts, he was chiefly remarkable for having had four successive wives. Without consulting his political colleagues, Halifax claimed the position, worth £4,000 a year in peacetime and twice as much in wartime,[1] or, rather, he invited the other Lords of the Treasury, Sir Thomas Lyttleton and Mr. John Smith,[2] in whose gift the appointment was, to nominate his brother Christopher, pending the king's approval of his own succession. Shrewsbury and the other Whig Ministers agreed to support the transaction on condition that he delayed his departure from the Ministry as long as possible. Without their support, he could not have got the king to agree. As it was, William was very annoyed at being presented with what, in effect, was an accomplished fact.

Lord Chancellor Somers, while much perturbed by Montague's panicky behaviour, sought to find excuses for him, saying that the king's indifference to his Whig Ministers encouraged ruinous attacks on their enemies' part. Nevertheless, he saw no reason why any of them should want to clear out so hastily, a misreading of the situation which brought on him the mortification of being asked by William to resign.

The suggestion that, in 1697, Somers and Montague clung to office like limpets to a wreck till they were pulled off by the personal attacks of the House of Commons,[3] is somewhat misleading. It was true of Somers, but scarcely so of Montague, who stayed on not because of any reluctance to go, or of any newborn hope that the king would change for the better, but simply to carry out his bargain with his colleagues and allow time for the appointment of a suitable successor. His own instinct was to depart before the inevitable storm broke. Outnumbered in the Commons and, with

[1] Note to *The Spectator*, edited by Henry Morley.

[2] Smith succeeded Montague as Chancellor of the Exchequer. On his retirement from a second term of office, he was appointed one of the four principal tellers of the Exchequer, a remunerative position. Like Montague, he saw nothing unseemly in stepping from the Ministry into a highly paid permanent job under the Government.

[3] Trevelyan's *Queen Anne*, Vol. I.

Harley in command of the Tory forces, to a large extent out-generalled, the Whigs were exposed to all manner of rebuffs ; nor was their ordeal rendered any more agreeable by the complaints of the king, who found the behaviour of the triumphant Tories intolerable. It was to Montague, as to the other Whig leaders, that William, resenting the policy of retrenchment which entailed the cutting down of the army and the repatriation of the Dutch Guards, the famous Blues, intimated his intention of resigning. "I am afraid," he told that gallant soldier, Lord Galway,[1] "the good Lord will punish the ingratitude of this nation." However, after giving the Cabinet a rare fright, he eventually calmed down in response to the expostulations of Somers, though without appreciably modifying his opinion of the English people. In his most pleasant moments he was wont to say, "It is Hosanna to-day ; it may be 'Crucify him' to-morrow."

The sense of a situation every day growing more critical strengthened Montague's resolve not to be too long in completing the change-over. Meanwhile, Somers continued to express doubts about the wisdom and propriety of his colleague's conduct. This, he remarked to Shrewsbury, gave him great disquiet, being "done much on the sudden, without the advice or knowledge of his best friends. I wish," he added, "it may turn well for himself, but I do not see how it can turn well for the public. If he quits the Treasury, somebody wholly of another sort will succeed. If he keeps both places, I fear it will be a new subject of envy."[2]

Somers had not long to wait before Montague made plain his intentions. On April 30th, 1697, delayed somewhat by difficulties as to his successor, who proved to be John Smith, his friend and Treasury colleague, Montague resigned the Chancellorship of the Exchequer which he had filled with such lustre, and the following November ceased to be First Lord of the Treasury. It is hard in these circumstances to discover any grim determination on his part to hold on to office.

Not unconnected with the timing of his exit from the Treasury may have been the warning that the Tories were getting ready to renew their attacks on him, but in a more virulent form. What was known to Matt Prior, in Paris, can scarcely have failed to reach Montague's ears. That November, writing to Lord Manchester [Halifax's stepson], Prior had this to say : "Whigs and Tories are, as of old, implacable. Dr. Davenant is coming up with another book in which he attacks the Grants, and is (as I am told) very scurrilous upon my Lord Chancellor and our dear friend Charles."[3] The book was the notorious one in which Davenant sought to make out that Montague was a filcher of public funds.

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Convinced by Somers that his stepfather had been under no pressure to quit the Treasury, Lord Manchester, on December 8th, 1699, wrote Montague a note of gentle remonstrance : "I am far from considering my own interest alone," he said, "when I wished you had done otherwise in relation to the

[1] Letter dated January 27th, 1699.
[2] *Hardwick State Papers.*
[3] *Memoirs of Affairs of State*, by Christian Cole.

Treasury. I can easily imagine a step of this nature could not be made without consulting your friends, but I am sorry to find my Lord Chancellor does not wholly approve of it, and him I take to be one of the best you have."[1] This hardly sounds as if Montague had done any limpet-like clinging to office, nor do Montague's own words, when challenged in Parliament with combining offices intended to be a check on each other, give much support to the suggestion. The grant of the Auditorship was, he said, made at his own desire and request, because he intended *shortly afterwards* to leave his own employment and places in the Treasury, and to obtain from his brother the surrender of the appointments mentioned.[2]

So far from Montague hanging on to Ministerial office, he seems from the early autumn of 1698 to have striven his hardest to break the connection, spurred on by what was to him the indecent spectacle of dissident Whigs voting with the Tories. He had no stomach for the taunts of his victorious foes in the Commons. To repeat what Lord Rosebery said of Carteret, "he was incapable of that self-contained patience, amounting to long-suffering, which was a necessary condition of the highest success in official life." He wanted to turn his back on the House which had witnessed his rise in the political firmament, and, as soon as the king was ready to oblige him, take his place in the Upper Chamber, where the Tories, rather mistakenly, thought he would be much less of a menace to them. In the Lords, where the Whig influence still predominated, he hoped to appeal to minds less clouded by prejudice and less swayed by personal antipathies. Though events often belied his opinions, he believed that in that august assembly, drawn largely from the most cultured class in the community, men could be ruled by reason and made submissive to telling argument.

On April 17th, 1700, confirming what Montague had for some time past suspected, the king, seeking to conciliate the Tories, who had popular opinion behind them, demanded the seals from the indignant Somers. He thought he was being badly treated, though it was difficult to see how His Majesty, having regard to the majority will in the Commons, could have done otherwise. When Montague ventured to protest, the king pleaded that Somers, who long had been ailing, had complained of being a drag on affairs. At the same time, he declared he would take it amiss if the ex-Chancellor slackened in his efforts to serve the nation, a warning which drew from the rather disconcerted statesman the remark that he hoped nothing would be expected of him that was inconsistent with his friendship and obligation to Somers.

That August [1700], at another conference of Whig leaders at Boughton, Montague made it clear that no invitation to rejoin the Government would tempt him, since in the present state of the parties he could not hope to do any good in the Commons. Hence his colleagues were not surprised when, on December 13th, he was summoned to the Upper House. That he chose to call himself Lord Halifax was, according to the omniscient Lord Dartmouth, out of compliment to *The Trimmer*, by whom he was given his first chance—recommended for a Clerkship of the Council. Rather

[1] *Memoirs of Affairs of State* by Christian Cole.
[2] *Lord Halifax's Works and Life*, 1715, p. 74.

ill-naturedly, Dartmouth, professing to express general opinion, said the title was chosen more out of vanity, of which Montague had a sufficient share, than gratitude, and in the hopes of raising it (the title) to as high a degree as his benefactor had done.[1] *The Trimmer's* son, it should be pointed out, had died the previous August [1700], leaving no successor to the title.

In 1699, while he still had the power, Montague saw to it that Newton, whom in 1695 he had appointed Warden of the Mint at a salary of £600 (incidentally disappointing Locke),[2] and to whose services in the arduous recoinage operation he had paid unstinted tribute, was promoted Master of the Mint at the increased salary of £1,500, sufficient for the great philosopher to live in comfort, and even provide luxuries for his charming niece, Catharine Barton, who was acting as his housekeeper. Statesman and scientist were now the closest of friends, a great difference from 1691, when, vexed by his inability to find a congenial opening for his talents, Newton had turned on Montague, accusing him and others of being neither sincere nor active in their efforts on his behalf. He had done with Montague, he told Locke, being fully convinced that upon an old grudge which he thought had worn itself out, Montague had been false to him. It was pure hallucination, most disturbing to Newton's friends, who knew the facts to be otherwise. Not until March 21st, 1692, when he became a Lord of the Treasury, was Montague in a position to further anybody's prospects, and then only in a minor degree, since he was the junior member of the Board. Thus Sir David Brewster, the distinguished biographer of Newton, had no grounds for sneering at Montague for failing his 'Varsity mentor.

That Newton began by cursing Montague was part of the curious fatality attending the statesman's relations with those friends destined to finish up so much in his debt. He did his best to put careless, happy-go-lucky Prior in the way of obtaining dignified positions (secretarial or diplomatic), and in view of the poet's subsequent defection, his letter of August 20th, 1698, to his "fellow-mouse" reads very strangely: "What shall I do, sir, to express the obligation I have to you, besides respecting you and obeying your commands for ever? . . . Adieu, dear master. Nobody respects the Chancellor of the Exchequer more, or loves dear Mr. Montague better, than his old friend and obliged humble servant, Mat." It was in this letter to Montague that Prior coined his famous word-picture of the ex-king: "I faced old James and all his Court the other day at St. Cloud. *Vive Guillaume.* You never saw such a strange figure as the old bully is, lean, worn and riv'led, not unlike Neale the projector.[3] The queen looks very melancholy, but otherwise well enough. Their equipages are all very ragged and contemptible."[4]

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As a peer, Lord Halifax, to give Montague his title, continued on a

[1] Lord Dartmouth's notes to Burnet. Davenant, it will be remembered, said that Montague aspired to be a Marquis.

[2] Locke was otherwise provided for, being appointed a Commissioner of Trade and Plantations.

[3] It was from Neale that Montague got his idea of Exchequer Bills.

[4] *Bath Papers.* King William agreed to allow James's queen £50,000 a year, the jointure to which she would have been entitled had her husband died king of England.

moderate scale to develop his expensive tastes, which were those of a patron of the arts and an assiduous collector of artistic and antiquarian rarities. Most of his entertaining he reserved for his abode at Hampton Court, reached either by coach or skiff. The wealthier of his guests drove over in their own carriages, but others of limited means, such as Swift, hired a conveyance at a cost of 12s., which the atrabilious satirist thought a needless imposition. In those days the waterman's charge for the single journey was 6s., equivalent at to-day's values to between £2 and £3.

Halifax's town house was in New Palace Yard, and the only contemporary reference to it known to the writer occurs in that most entertaining book, *Cambridge Under Queen Anne*, edited by J. E. B. Mayor, when, under date June 27th, 1710, is to be found this note: "We drove to see Westminster Hall . . . House of Commons, small and overcrowded during Session; Speaker's Chamber commanding a view of the Thames over the garden of Lord Halifax."

The new peer kept a liberal rather than a sumptuous table, and compared with his cousin, Ralph Montagu, now enjoying the Duchess of Albemarle's[1] large income, lived modestly. Indeed, in certain quarters his careful habits were already earning him the reputation of being parsimonious. A current jibe was that, since resigning from the Ministry, he who was fed on dedications confined the rewards of genius to a dinner or two. Largely to amuse the people who considered him mean, Davenant pictures him as a sort of Lucullus wont to hold forth in this riotous strain: "I have my country-house where I keep my whore as fine as an empress; you know how I am lodged in town, where I am served all on [silver] plate; I have my French cook and wax candles; no butcher's meat comes upon my table; I drink nothing but Hermitage, Champagne and Burgundy. Cahors wine has hardly admittance to my sideboard. My very footmen scorn French claret. I keep my coach and six, and out of my fine chariot I loll and laugh to see gallant fellows, Colonels and Admirals, trudging a foot in the dirt."[2]

In assembling his works of art, manuscripts relating to public affairs, prints, medals, coins and curios, Halifax did not disdain to call on his friends for various services. Shrewsbury, whose taste in pictures was supposed to be impeccable, bought him masterpieces in Italy, and Jacob Tonson, the bookseller, secured him rarities in Amsterdam, such as a set of mathematical instruments, curiously adorned, to hang upon his library wall.

Originally he had gone to Hampton Court to be near William III., who, suffering from asthma, divided his time between the palace there and the one at Kensington. Montague's country residence was more a rendezvous of genius than a haven for the wealthy and fashionable; for, true to his old predilection for the society of intellectuals, he invited the leading men of letters to be his guests, Prior, Congreve, Addison, and later Steele and Swift, being specially welcome.

At Whitton, which was close by, Sir Godfrey Kneller, whose versatile brush commemorates so many of the Kit-Kat Club members, had his country-house, and he and Halifax must often have made the journey together to Barn Elms, near Ranelagh, home of Tonson, where in summer

[1] His second wife. [2] *True Picture of a Whig.*

the Club used to meet to toast the fair ladies of their choice. Though Halifax appreciated Tonson's usefulness, he could not refrain from joining in the sport of baiting him, until he and his fellow Kit-Kats were sobered into better manners by the report that the bookseller proposed to abandon England and settle in his beloved native land, Holland.[1]

Rumour, always free with his name, grew tired of crediting the peer, a most eligible widower, with the intention of marrying some rich heiress or other, and, in default of a better explanation, fastened on his relations with Newton's attractive niece, whose charms, set forth in Halifax's laudatory verse, were proclaimed on the engraved wine-glasses of the Kit-Kat Club. There, if anywhere, insisted the scandalmongers, lay the clue to the mystery of the statesman's unshared domesticity. Since outside of Parliament Halifax never contradicted or corrected even the most scurrilous of the statements to which his enemies gave life, it is arguable that he accepted slander as part of the penalty of being a prominent public man, and thought ignoring it the most prudent policy. Nobody, not even Lord Somers, escaped attacks on his character. He was charged by the Duchess of Marlborough, following a quarrel, with living with another man's wife as publicly as if she had been his own, rather difficult to believe of so eminent and discreet a constitutional lawyer, which is not to say it was untrue.

Though an accomplished classical scholar, Halifax was an indifferent linguist, and his mistakes were apt to make him the butt of malicious criticism. A news-letter printed in the Harley papers speaks of him inviting a Polish Count and party to dinner *mercredi* (Wednesday) instead of, as intended, *mardi* (Tuesday), with the result that when they arrived there was no meal for them, and with due apologies he had to ask them to come the following day.

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If, consciously relaxing in the calmer atmosphere of the Upper House, he hoped for a lengthy respite from attack, he was doomed to disappointment. His enemies were resolved to give him neither rest nor quarter. When they had finished with him, they proposed punishing his friends, the wealthy Whig merchants, who had supported all his financial experiments. The onslaught began in the early part of 1701, when he was charged with the responsibility for the unpopular Partition Treaties, destined to ensure the balance of power in the event of the dissolution of the Spanish Dominions, following on the death of the mad king, Charles II. That it was purely a partisan attack was shown by the exclusion from the impeachment of Lord Jersey, Paris Ambassador at the time, and James Vernon, Secretary of State. While injuring Halifax, most hated of their political foes, they wished to remind the king[2] that there were limits to his powers.

William, a seventeenth-century king in his ideas, was used to being his own Foreign Minister, and he seems to have taken for granted his Ministers'

[1] Letter from Halifax to Lionel, Earl, later Duke, of Dorset, October 11th, 1706.

[2] "Attempts by the king or either House to go beyond what were thought to be their due bounds aroused strong opposition."—*Constitutional History of England*, Vol. IV, by Mark A. Thomson.

assent to treaties in which they had been given no say. Halifax never saw the first Treaty; to the second he had objected in general terms; but neither he nor his colleagues meeting at Tunbridge Wells, where Somers was recuperating, saw fit to press their objections to the point of a conflict with the king. It is unlikely that the Tories, now so zealous for the constitution, would have behaved any differently.

There followed a much more damaging charge—abusing the king's goodness by greed and covetousness in the matter of grants. Halifax shrewdly concluded that his best defence lay in complete frankness. He began his defence by reminding the Lords that the lavish grants made in respect of the Irish forfeitures[1] had all been resumed by Act of Parliament. The Whigs, none too sorry to see the greedy Dutch favourites called upon to disgorge, and fearful of inciting popular clamour, had not opposed the measure.

In all, from this source, he had benefited to the tune of £1,400, the major portion of which was not thought to come within the Resumption Act. If he was bound to repay the money, well and good; but was a man to be impeached because he did not happen to pay his debts the very day they were due? In addition, he had been granted £2,000 a year for seven years from the sale of fallen timber in the Forest of Dean, a royal preserve. As these were only weedings, no waste of timber was involved, nor could the interests of the Navy be said to be endangered. If in the cutting the public interest had been prejudiced, the fault lay not with him, but with the Surveyor-General, from whom all orders as to the felling originated.

A third charge, that of attempting two incompatible offices—the Chancellorship and the Auditorship of the Exchequer—was easily answered. His accusers had misread the circumstances. He had intended to make the exchange with all due haste, but he had necessarily to await the king's leave to withdraw from the Government. Meanwhile, his brother had acted as a sort of caretaker of the Auditorship.

Thinking that there had been built up against Halifax and other ex-Ministers impeached with him a formidable case, the Commons demanded that they should all be dismissed from the royal presence for ever. The Lords were not prepared to acquiesce in the irregularity of several of their members being censured before trial, and insisted on the Lower House, with whom for months they had been at loggerheads, making good the charges. As they failed to do so, the Lords dismissed the impeachments. Thus the arraignment of Halifax fizzled out much as had the threatened prosecution for corruption of the Duke of Leeds several years previously; and not improbably the one event influenced the other. But some of the mud flung at Halifax stuck; in particular, with Davenant's amusing but deadly tract every week widening its area of circulation, the opprobrious nickname of "filcher" took on a new lease of life.

Further attempts to convict Halifax and his colleagues of plundering the public by wheedling excessive grants out of the king were defeated by the

[1] Land to the extent of 522,638 acres had been distributed among Keppel (Earl of Albemarle), Elizabeth Villiers, Countess of Orkney, the king's mistress (equivalent in her case to an income of £25,000 a year), and others. The Countess's portion consisted largely of land belonging to ex-king James.

clever subtlety of Sir Robert Walpole, fast proving himself an astute and adroit Parliamentarian. Just before the 1702 Christmas Recess, Sir Edward Seymour, a relentless enemy of the Whigs, got his party to bring in a Bill resuming *all* grants made in King William's reign, Irish or otherwise. Young Walpole asked why the resumption should be limited to King William's reign. Let them also recall the grants in the previous reign—that of James II. As this would have meant penalising many of the Tories—the Duke of Leeds, for example, was known to be enjoying grants and pensions worth £5,500 per annum—Seymour's following lost their enthusiasm for the Bill.

Least objectionable of the grants to the Whig ex-Ministers, nearly all indefensible, were those made to Somers, a comparatively poor man. At the instance of Halifax, he had been given two royal manors at Reigate and Horley, plus £2,100 a year, paid out of the Crown's fee farm rents, the king agreeing with his financial adviser that it was only seemly that one in the position of Lord Chancellor should be able to maintain a certain dignity. Shrewsbury, wealthy in his own right, kept aloof from this dubious form of enrichment, and he goes down in history with the unique distinction of having refused the chance of owning New York. For when on May 26th, 1698, Somers, thinking it only right his Whig colleagues should share in the pickings, suggested it might be a proper thing if New York, which was granted by Charles II. to James, then Duke of York, were given to Shrewsbury, he refused to view the proposed gift in that light. It might be interesting to hear his views, if, brought back to life, he were permitted to gaze on the plantation which, with fastidious honesty, two hundred and fifty years ago, he rejected as wrong for him to possess.

Grateful for Walpole's timely intervention, Halifax took good care that his abilities were properly appreciated by the party. To him, more than anybody else, the Whig leaders looked for the maintenance of the party position in the House of Commons, and when in the autumn of 1703 he was credited with the intention of remaining in Norfolk until Christmas, Halifax was among those to implore him not to neglect Parliament.[1]

King William's death [March 8th, 1702], though not unexpected, meant the removal from the scene of a ruler under whom, despite temporary differences, he had prospered, and he was wise enough to perceive that the accession of Anne, a zealous Churchwoman, was not likely to improve the position of one so closely identified as himself with all that the late monarch had stood for—anti-Jacobitism, tolerance for the Dissenter, and a European rather than a narrow English outlook. The more experience Halifax had of the new queen, the more he was to regret the passing of William. He could even bring himself to sympathise with the late king's haunting lament, that all the difference he knew between the two parties was that the Tories would cut his throat in the morning, and the Whigs in the afternoon.[2]

Apart from politics, he was fated to swallow many bitter pills. Disillusionment, bitter and progressive, had overtaken his relations with Matt Prior. M.P. for the borough of East Grinstead, Prior had not hesitated to vote for his " fellow-mouse's " impeachment, though he had described the first

[1] *Robert Walpole*, by J. R. Stirling Taylor.
[2] Ralph, Vol. II, p. 908.

Partition Treaty as a masterpiece of statecraft. That after spending so many happy days under his roof, so old a friend should turn on him was a development calculated to destroy what little remained of Halifax's faith in human nature. Lord Manchester, taking note of Prior's casual visits to Hampton Court, chaffed him with preferring it to Paris.[1] To hear Prior talk, Halifax was the finest fellow in the world. "If people have affections after death, which is a query," he wrote him, "I shall doubtless love you longer than I am aware." And again, "Tis a strange ambition, this of yours, my dear Master, that does not content itself with less than the happiness of all those you have honoured with your friendship."

Are we to believe that these were merely empty compliments, void of sincerity and significance? Until his unexpected treachery, Prior had behaved with scrupulous honesty towards Halifax, never failing to repay his hospitality by some little gift, though forced to manage on £365 a year, or little more than a twentieth of what was received by a first rank Ambassador. When at The Hague he had sent his affluent friend wine, and when in Paris books, accompanied by what Halifax must have found still more acceptable—broad draughts of his rich, raffish humour. When old Lady Manchester died, Prior confessed that to frame suitable words in which to condole with the no doubt greatly relieved husband was the hardest task with which he had ever been faced. More congenial to his temper and less cramping to his style was to comment on the preposterous story that he, the indigent poet, the ill-paid Secretary to the Paris Embassy, was to marry the widowed Lady Falkland, who was in her 37th year, and as rich as he was poor. Alas! the lady was an old Troy who would not be taken in ten years, a Troy before whose walls a thin-carcassed and weak-lung'd creature such as he might lie till he ate horse-hides and shoe leather, unless refreshments arrived from the Treasury. No wonder that at the mere suggestion of so improbable an occurrence she had left for England, "rude as a bear and as mad as hot weather could make her".

That autumn [1700] Prior found reason to change his tune towards Montague. "For God's sake," he implored the Tory Earl of Jersey, formerly Paris Ambassador, but now Lord Chamberlain, "let somebody or other be ordained to rule us, for at present your Godolphins and Montagues equally deny that they have anything to do with us, and I think we are likely to fall between [the] two, though we might crush them both if we could act with vigour." That was strange talk coming from the man who had recently assured Halifax that he was ready to serve Lord Manchester [Paris Ambassador-designate] "with all the zeal and ardour which I owe to the blood of the Montagues".[2] But even on the worst construction these words scarcely convey any warning of Prior's subsequent treachery.

Sir James Montague, cool, temperate and judicial in his outlook, was not disposed to take the action of his old playmate too tragically. He thought that Prior had been the victim of conflicting loyalties; he had been forced to choose between behaving badly to the king or to Halifax. If he allowed

[1] June 30th, 1700. *Memoirs of Affairs of State*, by Christian Cole.

[2] Unless otherwise indicated, Prior's letters are to be found in the *Bath Papers*, Hist. MSS. Comm. Report.

the blame for the Partition Treaties to fall on the monarch, there was the danger of grave Constitutional repercussions; whereas if he screened the king and permitted Parliament to censure Montague and the rest, it might be unpleasant for them, but no great or irreparable harm would be done. Arguing in this fashion, he chose what he considered the lesser of two evils.[1] Halifax, however, could not bring himself to take such a detached view of the episode, and not until twelve years had passed was he ready freely to forgive poor, unfortunate Matt, while ever conscious of how much the poorer he was for the loss of his amusing prattle.

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Though in their spiteful efforts to ruin Halifax, the Tory majority in the Commons had so far been frustrated by the moderating action of the Lords, with whom they continued to quarrel, they had by no means abandoned their design. At the first opportunity they proposed resuming the attack. Meanwhile, having first represented him as the creature of Dutch William, they denounced him, by means of the Grub Street hacks in their pay, as a sycophant and time-server for hastening to pay his respects to Queen Anne, to whom in a poem called *The Golden Age* they tendered this warning:

> Dissembling statesmen shall before thee stand
> And Halifax be first shall kiss thy hand.

Defoe, one of the several pamphleteers of genius to flourish at this period, joined his voice to the rising volume of protest against the ignoble party strife. It was a shame, he thought, that at a time when Englishmen should unite against France and Rome, the Crown lacked the services of Somers and Halifax.[2] Both, indeed, had been ejected from the Privy Council, a proof of Anne's partiality for the Tories.

Despite this clear manifestation of the queen's ill-will, Halifax exerted tremendous influence in the Lords. He spoke on almost every subject and invariably with a knowledge and a sincerity that carried conviction. The authority of his manner and the sobriety of his arguments, as much as the breadth, moderation and tolerance of his outlook, evoked favourable comparison with the great statesman whose title he had revived. Such remarks as that " it was not for a patriotic Englishman to stir up domestic animosities while war was raging " appreciably helped to raise his stock.

He never descended to vehement assertion, the favourite device of the Tory mediocrities, but for his effects relied mainly on the orderly presentation of relevant facts which no amount of didactical skill could obscure. Like counsel speaking from a well-primed brief he was proof against surprises; for the most subtle or unexpected interjection he had a ready answer. From what has been preserved of his speeches, which in their entirety must have been well worth reading, it is obvious that he was possessed of a precise and tidy mind, which took pleasure in polished and logical exposition expressly calculated to appeal to a cultured audience. There are all the marks of infinite painstaking in his admirably balanced sentences, appropriate similes and occasional rhetorical and literary embroidery.

[1] Sir James Montague's explanation is printed in Austin Dobson's life of Prior.
[2] *Public Opinion and Politics in Eighteenth-Century England*, by W. T. Laprade.

The measure of his quality was the intensity of the antagonism he provoked. Opposed to him and intent on his ruin were the best brains in the Tory party. Most virulent of his foes was not, as might be expected, Harley—he had a sneaking admiration for him—but Henry St. John, the future Lord Bolingbroke, a natural orator of a different kind, who thought Halifax greatly overrated. During the debate on the Partition Treaties, acting as spokesman for the extreme section of the Tory party, he had assailed Halifax with an unbridled violence which, apologising for later, he attributed to the faults of youth and inexperience. Next, in June, 1703, on the strength of a report which he and six other Commissioners had drawn up on the Public Accounts, he persuaded the all-too-willing Commons to pass a vote of censure on Halifax for malfeasance in his capacity as Auditor-General. The Lords, and later the queen, for tactical reasons, came to his rescue. A Committee of Inquiry, headed by the Duke of Somerset, absolved him from blame,[1] but were unable to prevent a prosecution by the Attorney-General. At this stage, Anne, fearful of an irreparable breach between the two Houses, insisted that the matter must drop, which was accomplished by a plea of *nolle prosequi* being entered when the case came up for hearing. Whatever justification the Commons may have had for their sustained attack on Halifax, without the compelling motive of hatred of the man and his principles they would never have lent themselves to such vindictive and relentless persecution.

Previous to the onslaught on Halifax, the young Tory leader had begun the anticipated campaign against the Nonconformists, the largely hypocritical cry, "The Church in danger", serving as a rallying call for all opposed to the Dissenters, whose offence was aggravated by their evident prosperity. There were simple-minded and devout citizens who sincerely believed that the spread of Nonconformity was a serious menace to Anglicanism; but in the main the campaign was largely a political device, open to the grave and unforgivable objection of appealing to fanatical elements of the population, mentally degraded by sectarian intolerance. In their eyes there was something highly reprehensible and dangerous in the spectacle of people, not blessed with faith in the true communion, enjoying a measure of prosperity and influence incommensurate either with their numbers or their deserts. The Bill against Occasional Conformity, approved by the Tory majority in the Commons, aimed by deterrent penalties at stopping Dissenters from qualifying, by periodic visits to the Anglican Church, for offices of dignity and profit.

Thrice Lord Halifax persuaded his fellow-peers to throw out the intolerant measure, the last occasion being the troubled session which ended on March 14th, 1704. By his spirited and effective championship of the Dissenters he greatly enhanced his reputation in the Upper House, while deepening the hostility to himself in the Commons. A tract containing his reply to William Bromley, the Tory zealot,[2] who had sought to justify the proposed penalties, attracted widespread attention. It was an admirable example of his clear thinking and controversial genius, as well as of his mastery of historical

[1] Halifax, they said, had satisfied all the requirements of the statutes under which the duties of his office were defined.

[2] Bromley, destined to be Speaker of the House, had refused allegiance to William III.

facts. His tolerance, which, strangely enough, did not extend to Catholics, James II.'s catholicizing policy being all too fresh in his mind, was in pleasing contrast to the bigotry so prevalent in many sections of the community. Drawing for confirmatory evidence on records both old and new, he plainly showed that in excluding Dissenters from State employment, England had gone farther in intolerance than any other country, not excepting Catholic France, which had not disdained to summon to her aid a Protestant Admiral, Lord Treasurer, Constable and Commander-in-Chief of all her Forces. Holland had taken into her service not only members of every Christian denomination, but Jews as well, and her example had been followed by the German princes whose Ambassadors were often Jews. During her whole reign Elizabeth had suffered Papists to serve in her councils, fleets and armies, and the world might judge whether she were a wise Princess and a friend to the Church of England. The ancient world similarly mocked England's bigotry. Jew had employed Sadducee and heathen had employed Jew, Christian had employed pagan and vice versa.

Altogether the tract constituted a crushing indictment of the policy of persecuting the Dissenters, and in some small measure contributed to the restoration of Whig influence in the country, as reflected in the composition of the new House of Commons that met on September 5th, 1705. The Anglican extremists, known as "High-Fliers", suffered a serious setback, their chief representative in the Government, the narrow-minded High Churchman, the Earl of Nottingham, being politely dropped. Into the Coalition led by Marlborough and Godolphin, and destined to have such a glorious innings, had come the suave and accomplished Whig, Lord Cowper, appointed Lord Keeper, the serpent-like Harley, his gift for intrigue unaffected by his hard drinking,[1] and St. John, far too conscious of his intellectual superiority to make co-operation with him in the Cabinet easy.

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Though restored to the Privy Council, Halifax was not deceived by the queen's belated show of affability towards him. Anne could not forget he championed the Whigs whom she heartily detested, suspecting them of a design to monopolise all offices of State and reduce her to a state of dependence on them.[2]

Unlike Harley, whose relative, Mrs. Masham, the queen's bedchamber woman, was ready and willing to be his tool, Halifax suffered from having no active friend at court. But so obnoxious to the queen was the Whig Junto of which he was a prominent member, that to have been of use to him, such a friend had needed to be entirely in her confidence.

After his several years' absence from the government, he had begun to chafe at his exclusion from the active direction of affairs. His rightful place, he felt, was at the helm of State. Even allowing for his tremendous activity in debate, he was largely out of the limelight, and that was gall and wormwood to one of his sensitive vanity. His nature was as irresponsive to the happiness attendant on a quiet, unexciting life as George II.'s ear was to

[1] In his cups he was apt to quarrel with the equally bibulous Godolphin.
[2] Coxe's *Marlborough*.

good music. When the orchestra were tuning their fiddles, that coarse-grained monarch called out, "At last they are playing what I like!" Latterly, ceasing to sham dead, Halifax had struck up some sort of friendship with Marlborough, (who, incidentally, had protested against his acquittal when impeached), and unashamedly importuned him for suitable employment. That hero, having no wish to oblige Halifax, complained of being badgered out of his wits. According to him, when Halifax was not caballing with the queen's entourage, he was demanding some high and mighty office which would not conflict with his Auditorship. That he did not ask for a position in the Ministry was not from any desire to save Marlborough or Godolphin, the Lord Treasurer, embarrassment, but because only the offer of the Lord Treasurership, unlikely to be made while Anne lived, appeared to him to justify the surrender of his Auditorship.

Incompatibility of temperament made the relations between Marlborough and Halifax most difficult. Whether they would have been any better had Halifax, a widower at 38, and reasonably well-off, paid the Churchills the compliment of wishing to become one of the family, is extremely doubtful. In any case, he never came forward as suitor for either the Lady Anne or the Lady Mary Churchill, possibly regarding himself as too elderly to have much chance of success. While his glances were fixed elsewhere, Sunderland's son married the one and Ralph Montagu's son the other. Yet he seems to have been sufficiently impressed by the Lady Anne's charms to pay her this glowing poetical tribute:

Vandyke had colours, softness, fire and art;
When the fair Sunderland inflamed his heart:
Waller had numbers, fancy, wit, and fire,
And Sacharissa was his grand desire,
Why then, at Althorp seem her charms to faint
In these sweet numbers, and that glowing paint?
This happy seat a fairer mistress warms:
The shining offspring has eclipsed her charms
The different beauties in one face we find:
Soft Amoret with brightest Sacharissa join'd
As high as Nature reach'd, their art could soar
But she ne'er made a finish'd piece before.

Judged on his merits, Halifax deserved to be humoured and indulged by the Government, dependent as it was on Whig support. With Somers, whose health was bad, less active than formerly, and Shrewsbury still dawdling away his time in Italy, he had the right to regard himself as the main prop of the Junto, or Whig ruling body. His speeches in the Lords continued to be models of good sense and statesmanlike sobriety. How well he expressed himself when pleading the right of the Lords independently to examine persons in custody suspected of designs against the State![1]

"If it should happen in future times that ill men should gain too great a degree of favour with our Princes, how easy will it be for them to stifle or defeat all Parliamentary enquiries into their crimes! For if being in prison . . . will protect them from being examined in the House of

[1] A plot had been unearthed in Scotland which was taken to aim at the restoration of the Stuarts.

Lords, or from being put into custody by the proper officers of the House during the examination, and debarred from conversing with others, it will certainly be always in the power of favourites to cause those who can be witnesses against them, as well as the accomplices of their designs, to be taken into custody. And if persons in custody are out of reach of the House of Lords, who are the hereditary Counsellors of the Crown, and in whom a judicial power is lodged by the Constitution, it is not to be imagined that the Commons can pretend to a greater power of examining, committing or restraining them. . . .

"It may with modesty and truth be affirmed that the Lords have in all times been the surest and most natural bulwark of the prerogative of the Crown, they being (as Her Majesty's grandfather of blessed memory was pleased to express it) an excellent screen and bank between the Prince and the people, to assist each against the encroachments of the other."

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Great as was his absorption in politics, Halifax never allowed his interest in literature to wane. As it was his earliest, so it remained his last love. In the society of men of letters he was always sure of passing a few pleasant hours, and of obtaining that intellectual and recreative refreshment which was indispensable to his enjoyment of life. Small in comparison was the satisfaction he derived from most of the pursuits to which he consecrated his rapidly-dwindling leisure. By temperament and mental equipment, Prior was best cut out to be the companion of the hours he stole from affairs. Their wit blended harmoniously, and, since they shared the same taste for piquant gossip, they could always reckon to keep each other amused.

Disappointed in Prior, he fell back on Congreve (who equally appealed to Ralph Montagu) and Addison, ever ready with compliments to make his welcome doubly sure. The future of the great essayist was a source of considerable anxiety to him, and it irked him, being out of office, to realise how little it lay in his power to serve him. Having been the cause of Addison devoting himself to letters instead of the Church, as was his original intention, he felt a certain responsibility for his well-being. As Steele put it to Congreve, "I doubt not but you remember the warm instances that noble lord [Halifax] made to the head of the College not to insist upon Mr. Addison going into orders . . . My lord ended [his letter] with a compliment that, however he might be represented as a friend to the Church, he never would do it any other injury than keeping Mr. Addison out of it." In 1699, Halifax, in conjunction with Somers, had secured Addison a pension of £300 to enable him to study abroad. There he composed his *Letter to Lord Halifax*, which Courthope says contains perhaps the best verses he ever wrote. Included were these complimentary lines:

> While you, my lord, the rival shades admire,
> And from Britannia's public posts retire,
> Nor longer, her ungrateful sons to please
> For their advantage sacrifice your ease;
> Me unto foreign realms my fate conveys,
> Through nations fruitful of immortal lays.

The death of William III., followed by his patron's fall from power, had the effect of leaving him stranded. Imagine, then, Halifax's relief and joy, in the autumn of 1704, to be in a position once more to do his beloved friend a good turn. Godolphin, head of the Ministry, anxious that the glorious victory at Blenheim should be commemorated in spirited verse, invited Halifax, a presumed authority on poetry, to suggest someone capable of fittingly rising to the occasion. His rather chilling answer was that while he knew the ideal man for the task, he could not think of asking him. Why? Because, "while too many fools and blockheads were maintained in their pride and luxury at the public expense, such men as were really an honour to their age and country were shamefully suffered to languish in obscurity . . . [hence] he would never desire any gentleman of parts and learning to employ his time in celebrating a Ministry which had neither the justice nor the generosity to make it worth his while." But on Godolphin promising that whoever was nominated should have no cause for complaint, Halifax sufficiently relented to name Addison, at the same time stipulating that the advances should come from the Lord Treasurer. Henry Boyle [later Lord Carleton] found Addison in a cheap lodging three flights of stairs above a small shop in the Haymarket. To induce him to write the desired poem, he offered him a Commissionership of Appeal in the Excise, coupled with the promise of suitable advancement.

In due course appeared *The Campaign* with its unforgettable lines :

> . . . And taught the doubtful battle where to rage.
> . . . Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.

Few men with any claim to literary distinction besought Halifax's patronage in vain. No book worthy of publication but started with his subscription. Wycherley, the playwright, one of the numerous lovers of Lady Castlemaine, learning from Dr. Garth that Halifax had subscribed for his book of poems published in May, 1704, made the statesman the recipient of his worries—how one Sam Briscoe, a rascally Covent Garden publisher, had defaulted on his promise to bring out the book,[1] leaving its publication in the air. The point of the episode is that worldly-wise Wycherley would not have wasted his ink on a man as selfish as Pope and Swift were at pains to picture Halifax. There was a limit even to this universal patron's patience. It was unfair to expect him to put up with the quirks of Edmund ["Rag"] Smith, that man of fine mind ruined by laziness and sexual over-indulgence, who, having engaged Halifax's interest by dedicating to him his tragedy *Phaedra*, simply could not be bothered to keep an appointment with him, though it would have meant a job worth £300 a year. Nor was it reasonable to expect him not to resent the ingratitude of those writers who, having fawned on him whilst it paid, turned on him when that promised to be more profitable. Swift, whose nature was full of bile and who mostly hated his fellow-men, praised Halifax so long as he thought his goodwill a help to the coveted English Deanery or Bishopric, then sneered at him as one who

> . . . claim'd the station
> To be Maecenas of the nation

[1] *Brawny Wycherley*, by Willard Connely.

which, at any rate, was better than allowing men of genius to rot from neglect and starvation.

Defoe, most fertile and most popular of literary pamphleteers, who was taken up by Halifax, on the whole behaved well. He did not forget that Halifax had recommended him to Godolphin, and in his *Jure Divino*, a poetical work on government published in 1706, paid the statesman this charming compliment:

> So sweet his voice and all his thoughts so strong,
> So smooth his numbers and so soft his song.

In April, 1705, he assured Halifax, to whom he was offering himself as political writer, that he was willing to wait until the ex-Chancellor got back into power. Fortunately his offer was not accepted; otherwise he would have had to wait nine years. The letter in which Defoe conveyed this assurance is remarkable for the only known mention of his brother, a muddle-headed fellow who had acted as intermediary in the negotiations. Through Halifax the famous writer was, on one occasion, to receive a considerable sum of money. The service was not specified, but, clearly enough, it was from the Government, for services rendered.[1]

That Halifax should be interested in Defoe is not strange. From the first he realised what an asset such a man could be to the Whig party, and was grieved to think he was unable to utilize his services. He can hardly have helped admiring Defoe's courage in attacking the intolerant Church party, or his equanimity when placed at their instigation in the pillory, where, contrary to the expectation of his persecutors, he was saluted with flowers instead of the usual offerings of rotten cabbage, and saw and heard his health drunken in great pots of beer. His last onslaught, contained in the most famous of his political pamphlets, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, must have afforded Halifax considerable amusement. Under the guise of censuring the Nonconformists, it exposed to public ridicule the reckless and unchristian invective employed by their Anglican foes.

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That Halifax's interest in all that had to do with literature sprang from nobler motives than selfishness—the enlargement of his own fame and the flattering of his admittedly active vanity—was proved by his solicitude for the precious records of the past, a solicitude which, on the most optimistic showing, could not be expected to earn him any dividends save the doubtful gratitude of posterity, which he had to take for granted. But for his initiative, many priceless manuscripts and records dating from the bygone centuries would have perished, so neglectful and indifferent were the majority of the nation, and so slothful their rightful mentors, the politicians, in reminding them of their sacred duty. Until he took them in hand, the Public Records lay in chaotic disorder in the Tower, at the mercy of lazy, incompetent and neglectful officials, the magnitude of whose task was their excuse for doing little or nothing. Roused to a fever heat of indignation by the deplorable scandal, he, ever the tireless man of action, gave Parliament no rest until

[1] *Defoe*, by Thomas Wright.

they agreed on the necessary minimum of reforms. Additional staff imbued with the requisite zeal were recruited, while the old officials were warned to mend their ways and earn their pay. As a result of these energetic measures, the great mass of material was saved from destruction, and under suitable conditions ultimately placed at the disposal of the student and those engaged in research.

Next Halifax turned his attention to the famous Cottonian manuscripts, which were kept in a manner wholly calculated to defeat the objects of the original owner, Sir Robert Cotton. The precious hoard, consisting principally of ancient chronicles, Biblical MSS., State Papers of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, chartularies, and early copies of the Scriptures, was deposited in Cotton House, which stood between the two Houses of Parliament. The Lords, prompted by Halifax, besought the queen to buy the residence and by enlargement and conversion make it a storeroom worthy of its priceless contents. For the sum of £4,500 paid over to Sir John Cotton, grandson of the founder of the collection, the house became the property of the nation, and steps were taken to render the collection conveniently accessible to students of all nations. But instead of rebuilding Cotton House, the authorities, in 1712, removed the library to Essex House, Strand, where it remained until 1730. Not until 1753, when the British Museum was established, did the collection find a home graduated to its importance, fire, meanwhile, having destroyed an appreciable portion.[1]

These beneficent activities, prelude to the advent of the great national library that was to arise on the site of Montagu House, were supplemented by his efforts to provide Thomas Rymer, the royal historiographer, with the means of printing the various sections of his *Foedera*. Thanks largely to Halifax's benevolent intercession, the poor scholar, struggling under a deep burden of depressing poverty, had the inestimable satisfaction of publishing in his lifetime the great majority of the seventeen volumes devoted to the public conventions of Great Britain with other Powers. An authoritative source of reference for almost all periods of the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century, they stand as a perpetual monument to Rymer's profound industry and scholarship, no less than to Halifax's instinct for what was permanent in literature.

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In none of the letters Halifax had received from Shrewsbury had there been the slightest hint that he contemplated marriage, least of all to a foreigner. Judge, then, of his astonishment to learn in August, 1705, that the Duke, so justly proud of his quarterings, had wedded his Italian mistress, the fantastic Marchioness of Paleotti, a creature who might have walked straight out of Mozart's operas, and as little suited to be his Duchess as

[1] *The Handbook to the Library of the British Museum*, by Richard Sims, Department of MSS., 1854, contains a very interesting account of the Cotton collection. The author, referring to the founder (" this great national benefactor "), says his death was hastened by the commandeering of his library by the Government on the ground that the information it contained was too dangerous to be disseminated, and that he had allowed it to be used by enemies of his country. By locking up his books from him, he declared, they had broken his heart and been the cause of his mortal malady.

that wretched, crawling creature, red-nosed Mrs. Masham, was to be the queen's confidant. With her little affectations—she pretended to a girlish manner entirely out of keeping with her years and physical form—with her consciously droll sayings—she thought the Lord Jehovah one of the new Peerage creations; unable to say Swift's name in English she called him Dr. Presto (the Italian equivalent); she complained of being lame because of the things growing on her toes like thumbs[1]— with her ludicrous antics—she would rapturously embrace her husband in public—with her outrageous bids at flirtation—she set her cap even at that satiated admirer of fat women, George I.—with all these extraordinary foibles and mannerisms she created constant amusement at Court, though to be found laughing at her rarely paid, as those who were foolish enough to do so discovered to their cost. Naturally enough, those sharp-tongued cronies, Lady Cowper and the Duchess of Marlborough, exchanged witticisms about her. "Your description is very good," remarked the first very intelligent lady to the other, "I have heard much such an account of her, only with this addition: My Lord Duke looking a little grave, she chucked him several times under the chin, bidding him look up, amongst all the company. She is a great honour to the Court!"

The gossip which preceded the Duchess's arrival in England was scarcely of a sort to endear her to the haughty Whig aristocracy. Apparently, ill-health had not been Shrewsbury's only reason for quitting England. He had become entangled with the widow of Sir Robert Howard [whose place Halifax had taken] and, rather than keep his engagement to marry her, fled to Rome. There he fell into the toils of the Marchioness of Paleotti, *quondam* mistress of Barrillon, Louis XIV.'s unscrupulous Ambassador in London, but did not find it so easy to free himself, being stopped on his homeward journey by her brother, and under duress made to return and do the honourable thing by the lady.[2]

Halifax, in common with most of his Whig friends, found it extremely difficult to tolerate this stout, shrill-voiced, masculine-looking woman, whose faded aspect was not compensated for by any charm, her manners being atrocious, and her familiarities, such as eating at other people's tables, revolting; but when he found that to remain friends with the Duke he had to be approved by the Duchess, he did his best to placate her.

The year 1705 was prolific in unpleasant surprises for Halifax. The worst, perhaps, was the renewal of what was an old quarrel with Lord Carmarthen, the Duke of Leeds' son and heir, who claimed Halifax's Auditorship of the Exchequer on the ground that it had been promised him by Charles II. Tired of the implied suggestion that he had stolen the sinecure, Halifax offered to give him satisfaction in St. James's Park, but on arriving at the spot fixed for the duel found not Carmarthen, who had been seized, but Prince George of Denmark, who bade him go home. Denied redress in the field, Carmarthen sought it in the Courts, but the ruling went against him.

Then Halifax had quite a run of luck. Besides being appointed one of the

[1] *Wentworth Papers.*

[2] *Reminiscences Written by Mr. Horace Walpole in* 1788. Notes and Index by Paget Toynbee, 1924.

Commissioners for the Union with Scotland, he was charged to convey to the aged Electress Sophia of Brunswick the Acts nationalising her and her Protestant issue; and, furthermore, nominated to help negotiate the proposed treaty with Holland, a decidedly awkward commission. With or without Marlborough's direct aid, he was required to persuade Holland to guarantee the English succession in the Protestant House of Hanover, and to accept as security against the French a reasonable Barrier in the Spanish Netherlands. This promised to be no mean achievement, since the Dutch raised their demands at every favourable turn. For three weeks that spring he and Marlborough actively collaborated at The Hague, when the Commander left to join the Army. On his own account Halifax made slow progress, and he had to confess to Somers, who missed him greatly,[1] that he was being sadly humbugged. Not only did the Dutch claim as Barrier that portion of the Spanish Netherlands freed by Marlborough, but that which still remained in Louis's grasp.

Giving them time to cool down, Halifax made his way to Hanover, arriving there on June 1st. He was accompanied by Addison, now one of the Under-Secretaries of State, and that dashing blade, Lionel Cranfield, future 1st Duke of Dorset [son of his old patron]. Later he was joined by the gay and handsome Vanbrugh, architect of Blenheim, whose duty as Clarencieux King-of-arms was to invest the Electoral Prince [George II.] with the Order of the Garter. He and Halifax were old friends. Cast in the Bastille for landing in Calais without a passport, Vanbrugh, then a gay and dashing army officer, had whiled away the time by composing a lively comedy, *The Provok'd Wife*. Recognising its merits from excerpts read to him, Halifax encouraged the budding playwright to finish it. Vanbrugh showed his gratitude by sly digs at the other's vanity and foibles.

The aged Electress, taking note of Halifax's cordially-worded letters of recommendation, received him with every mark of respect, but being economically-minded jibbed at having to present him, as custom demanded, with a gift of gold plate costing 30,000 florins. Not to be caught again in the same fashion, she hinted in the plainest possible language that future missions should be discharged by the permanent English resident, Brig.-General Howe, thus dispensing with further gifts of plate. Her behaviour to Halifax was a curious mixture of tact and unconscious gaucherie. On his being invited to the Electoral Palace, she so disposed herself as to hide the portrait of The Pretender. On the other hand, forgetful of his Whig principles, she kept harping on the hereditary character of her right to the Throne. Fortunately for his peace of mind, he was not to discover, until after his return to England, that she had erased his name, along with six others, from the submitted provisional list of Regents to take over when Queen Anne died.[2]

The month he and Addison (for a poet excessively modest in the Electress's opinion)[3] spent in Hanover was largely given over to festivities, including

[1] May 28th, 1706. Somers to Halifax. *Hardwicke State Papers*.

[2] Halifax owed his enlightenment to Anne, who, to satisfy her curiosity, opened the envelope enclosing the amended list: *The Electress Sophia*, by A. W. Ward.

[3] Leibnitz, Vol. III. *Correspondance avec l'electrice Sophie*.

the marriage of the Prince Royal of Prussia to the Elector's pretty nineteen-year-old daughter, Sophia Dorothea. It was with no small regret he ended his stay, in order to return to Holland to continue the battle with the long-winded and evasive Dutch negotiators. Prior to meeting them, he accepted an invitation to attend the synagogue of Portuguese Jews at Amsterdam, where, as a memento of his visit, he was given a Latin copy of the prayer in Hebrew for Queen Anne, which later he had turned into English. He might have felt even more interested had he been reminded that, fifty years earlier [1656], that zealous and none too wise community had excommunicated one of its greatest sons—Spinoza.

Warned by Marlborough that if Halifax had to return empty-handed to England great mischief would result to Anglo-Dutch relations, Heinsius, the Dutch Pensionary, induced the States to adopt a more conciliatory attitude, and Halifax, "brilliant but impetuous, over-sanguine in success and petulant in opposition",[1] imagined his efforts were about to be crowned with success. But as the weeks sped by without a decision being forthcoming, he despaired of bringing the Dutch to reason. Made intransigent by the approaches of Louis's agents, who promised them the whole of the Spanish Netherlands, they were disinclined to listen to Halifax preaching moderation. In August he complained to the Elector of Hanover that they were still bargaining like merchants.

His remonstrances to Heinsius were more forcible than diplomatic. He had, he said, entered upon the negotiations not by commission, but as a volunteer, out of a desire to serve both countries, and had been confronted with difficulties when everything had seemed to him so plain. It was not his business to meddle any more, or find expedients. That Heinsius should not think this brusque form of address implied an end of the negotiations, Portland hastened to explain that Halifax had been upset by the report that the Dutch had specially manufactured difficulties to rob him of the *kudos* of concluding the Treaty. Halifax again applied himself to the task, but it was not given to him to succeed.

The four months' arduous negotiations made plain both his virtues and defects. While the discussions were confined to cold, harsh realities, he managed for the most part to remain master of the situation, having a ready answer to all objections. When, however, the discussion became mixed up with such intangible considerations as ambition, pride or pure opportunism, he was seen to less advantage, lacking the temper to cope with a situation where the logic of facts was not allowed to prevail. Unlike Addison, who for all his literary skill found it agony to compose a dispatch, Halifax shone in official communications. He was complimented by the Government not only on the way he had kept them posted, but on the skill with which he had interpreted their instructions.

It was, therefore, with considerable confidence that he looked forward to being appointed joint plenipotentiary for the Peace, whenever the time for discussing terms arrived. In these hopes he unwisely took Marlborough's goodwill for granted. He had done his best to convince the Duke of his

[1] *The Dutch Barrier*, by R. Geikie and I. Montgomery, the most authoritative exposition of the issues involved in this long-drawn-out controversy.

loyalty and admiration, speaking of him to Godolphin as "our hero", who "conquers so fast I am afraid I shall not be able to follow him"; but all in vain. Marlborough preferred Lord Somers, and, when he refused, turned to Lord Townshend, whom, no doubt, he considered a more accommodating colleague than Halifax. Whatever Townshend's qualities, as a statesman he was a lightweight compared with Halifax, nor did he enjoy anything like the other's prestige. Marlborough was within his right to say whom he wished to work with, but he ought not to have grumbled at Halifax turning on him. He could not have it both ways. If he wanted to retain Halifax's friendship, he had no business to snub him; if he risked slighting him, then he had to expect reprisals.

. . . . . .

How much Halifax took the snub to heart may be gauged from his indignant letter to Sarah, the appointment as Secretary of State of whose son-in-law, the Earl of Sunderland,[1] he had helped to bring about, despite the vigorous objections of the queen. At the desire of Marlborough and Godolphin he had, he said, accepted the unthankful and difficult task of Ambassador to the Court of Hanover, and by the same commands, much against his will, had entered into the negotiations over the Barrier, taking upon himself the thankless task of opposing the unreasonable pretensions of the Dutch. Finally, he had striven, though unsuccessfully, to persuade Lord Somers to join Lord Marlborough in treating of peace when the time came. On Somers's refusal he had, at least, expected to be asked in turn; instead, Lord Townshend had been recommended. "I have told your Grace," added Halifax, "a short but melancholy story by which I think it appears I have been treated with great contempt and unkindness, as will be judged both at home and abroad, at a time that I am not conscious myself of having deserved either from Lord Marlborough. Madam, I will make no other reflections, and forbear saying any more on a subject so afflicting to me. I beg Your Grace will not imagine me so vain as to be much disturbed for missing the most expensive, most troublesome and most dangerous commission in the world, but I own I am almost distracted to find I can no way get any share of Lord Marlborough's esteemed friendship. I have done all I could to merit them [it], and for that intention I hope your Grace will pity and forgive me."[2]

In writing to the Duchess, Halifax imagined that, out of gratitude for his efforts on behalf of her son-in-law, she would remonstrate with the Duke. Psychological understanding was not his strong point, and here, as so often was to be the case, he hopelessly misjudged the situation. Sarah was only interested in what benefited her husband and would not budge an inch to salve Halifax's injured pride.

Halifax's opportunity for revenge came when Marlborough's rapacious and incompetent brother, Admiral George Churchill, understudy of the Lord High Admiral [Prince George of Denmark], was arraigned for muddle and mismanagement. The great soldier, forgetting the way he had slighted him, asked Halifax to be merciful, an approach which went unanswered.

[1] Appointed December 3rd, 1706.
[2] Letter dated March 29th, 1707.

But in those days statesmen and politicians behaved like spoilt children, and there was nothing surprising about Halifax, some time later, inviting Marlborough, though not in so many words, to let bygones be bygones. Throughout the estrangement with the Duke, he had continued to court the Duchess "with increasing assiduity", devising special concerts and entertainments for her benefit, and even standing hat in hand at the door of her carriage.[1] He had always spoken well of the Duke to her, "the glorious victory at Ramillies had exalted and crowned the wife",[2] being a sample remark. But it was not to be expected that he could remain on this forced note without some form of reciprocation. If he still attempted to humour her whims and smile on her perverse and contrary moods, it was with progressive distaste for the exacting ordeal. Gradually his attentions slackened off. Deprived of the anodyne of his expensive courtesies, Sarah proceeded to view him in what she considered his true light. As a result, he became as much a target for her abusive pen and tongue as any of the people who dared oppose her will.

There may be, and undoubtedly is, a modicum of fact in the disparaging anecdotes which she devoted to his memory, but that for the most part they are exaggerations and distortions of the truth is equally beyond question. With Sarah, everything was either dead black or dead white; there were no dappled tints in her vocabulary. That being on such coldly correct terms with Anne he should think fit to be courteous and obliging to Mrs. Masham, Sarah's poor relative ["that jade, my cousin Kate, a woman I took out of a garret"], who had displaced her in the queen's esteem, was, of course, criminal conduct in the eyes of the Duchess, and in one of her stories she depicts him as thrown into confusion by the desire to stand well with both. It seems that Mrs. Masham unexpectedly turned up at an entertainment organised in Sarah's honour at Hampton Court, but on seeing how the land lay rushed off to a neighbouring inn, where, thanks to wine and choice meats hurriedly sent along by Montague, who tendered his apologies in person, she enjoyed a good meal. Returning to his distinguished guest, he made light of Mrs. Masham's favour, and later, so Sarah believed, made similar fun of her.[3]

Halifax and Walpole were destined to be Sarah's principal aversions, and she was fond of quoting her husband and Godolphin as saying that both were useful, but without judgment. The vanity, covetousness and alleged meanness of Halifax were her favourite themes, adorned by apposite examples, though remembering the proverb, "people who live in glasshouses should not throw stones", she would have been wise to keep off such dangerous topics as meanness and covetousness. The enormously rich woman, whose last act as Keeper of the Privy Purse, when parting in anger with Anne, had been to claim the pension of £2,000 a year, with arrears in full, offered her by the queen nine years previously and then refused, was the last person on earth to charge a man of Halifax's undoubted liberality with these vices.

[1] Churchill's *Marlborough*, Vol. III.

[2] *Private Correspondence of the Duchess of Marlborough.*

[3] Coxe's MSS. British Museum. Quoted in *Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough*, by Kathleen Campbell.

According to her, the statesman's vanity was such that, though he was a frightful figure, he yet pretended to be a lover and followed several beauties, who laughed at him for his pains. His covetousness was reflected in his constant demands for more money than his services were worth. As for his meanness, once he obtained from her £100 for a poor author, and she was sure that if any of the money went to the scribe, Halifax, and not she, got the credit for it. Again, for fear of lowering the value of his silver plate by constant cleaning, he preferred, when alone, to dine off pewter, and though his nephew and heir, George Montague, had little means of his own, he allowed him only £500 a year, as Lady Scarborough, his mother-in-law, had ruefully confessed to her. His entertainments, especially to his city friends, were admirably organised, but in arranging them Halifax had always an ulterior motive.

Endorsing the Tory Lord Dartmouth's opinion, the Duchess described him as celebrated as Sir Robert Walpole for his ill-breeding. "What you say of Halifax," remarked the Duke, hastening to acclaim her prejudiced views, "I have believed for a long time. If he had no other fault but his unreasonable vanity, that alone would be capable of making him guilty of any fault . . . He has no other principle but his ambition, so that he would put all in distraction rather than not gain his point"—the last remark prompted by Sarah's warning that Halifax and her son-in-law, Sunderland, were both making up to Harley and Mrs. Masham.

The Junto's[1] relations with the queen were rendered none the easier by Harley's appeals to her to resist their demands. Using Mrs. Masham as a conduit pipe, he was able to keep in constant touch with Anne. However, they presently got even with him. On his confidential clerk, Wm. Grey, being caught betraying vital Cabinet secrets to France, they supported Marlborough and Godolphin in the demand for his resignation, saying that carelessness such as his, in leaving about the most private papers, was inexcusable.

But Harley out of office was possibly more dangerous than Harley in office. Had it not been for him, the queen would scarcely have ventured to oppose the appointment of Sir James Montague, Halifax's brother, as Attorney-General, as desired by the Whigs. Apparently the only reason why he, the Solicitor-General, should not be promoted was her insistence that it was for the Junto to defer to her wishes, and not she to theirs. But their persistence won through in the end; on October 29th, 1708, Montague's ambition was gratified.

Rather short-sightedly, Halifax believed that the fall of Harley, who had played a double game for himself, would benefit the Whigs.[2] Instead it led to their temporary rout. From the moment of his dismissal which he had taken with the insouciance peculiar to his nature, Harley planned to come back stronger than ever, and to that end undeviatingly pursued the subtle policy of splitting the Whigs, who were the Government's mainstay, and then one by one overthrowing the chief Ministers. It was his aim to turn every anti-government incident to his advantage. As he told Swift,

[1] The Junto consisted of Somers, Halifax, Wharton, Orford, and Sunderland.
[2] Letter in Welbeck collection.

" Wisdom in public was not what was commonly believed, the forming of schemes with remote views, but making use of such incidents as happen." His Whig enemies played into his hands by a series of incredible blunders, not least of which was the decision to submit the obscure preacher of violence, Henry Sacheverell, " the trumpeter of sedition " as Cunningham calls him, to the solemn dignity of a trial by impeachment. In the course of a fiery speech at St. Paul's on November 5th, 1709, he had denounced the principles of the Revolution and reasserted the doctrine of non-resistance and passive obedience, branding Godolphin, known as the " fox ", as a " wily volpine ".[1] At the trial, Halifax, who, like Somers, doubted the wisdom of advertising this man of little merit, recommended a light penalty, but Shrewsbury, forswearing his Whig principles, voted for acquittal. In the end the insolent preacher received a nominal sentence. The hangman burnt his sermons and the hysterical mob burnt the Dissenters' chapels. Somers, on being told the news, prophesied in the hearing of Swift the probable ruin of the Whig party.

This foolish prosecution alienated from the Whigs much public support. In April, 1710, directly following it, Shrewsbury, who had openly advertised his dissent from the Whig policy of continuing the war until their extreme demands were met, became Lord Chamberlain—the first move in Harley's scheme of overthrowing the Ministry. Next Somerset and Newcastle were induced to throw in their lot with Shrewsbury, and even Somers, the Lord President, whose salary Anne had secretly increased, was muzzled by the artful suggestion that he was likely to succeed Godolphin, marked down for early disgrace. The claws of these Whig chieftains having been pared, the queen felt strong enough to pull down Sunderland, to whose appointment as Secretary of State she had never reconciled herself. He received his quietus on June 14th, 1710, declining a pension offered as a sop with the cold reply that, if he could not have the honour to serve his country, he would not plunder it.

Halifax quickly accommodated himself to the surprising changes in the political landscape. Soon, according to the omniscient Duchess of Marlborough, he was claiming to have as much respect for Shrewsbury, the apostate, as for any of his friends. As he would hardly say less to Shrewsbury's face, she concluded that the Lord Chamberlain, Halifax, Newcastle and Harley were pretty nearly of one mind.

His reconciliation with Shrewsbury, which connoted also cordial relations with Harley, busy pulling strings behind the scenes, brought a quick profit in the shape of his appointment as joint plenipotentiary with Marlborough and Townshend in making the peace. Naturally enough, the Duke, who had not been consulted, was upset, and remembering how strenuously he had fought to keep Halifax out, wondered what that haughty gentleman's attitude to him would be. Halifax, too clever to vaunt himself on his triumph, offered to show Marlborough all the honour and respect imaginable, and expressed concern at finding how far he had declined in his esteem. As for

[1] *Volpone or the Fox*, Ben Jonson's famous play, first acted in 1606, has for its principal character, Volpone, a childless Venetian of great wealth, who pretends to be dying in order to attract costly gifts from his would-be heirs.

Godolphin, he affected to believe that the appointment would do good, if only by correcting the impression that Marlborough was not seriously disposed towards peace.[1]

Had not the Lord Treasurer been weary of the struggle, he would never have swung round so completely regarding Halifax. He was obviously sincere when he told Marlborough that, compared with his own, the life of a galley-slave was paradisaical. No more than the Duke had he any liking for Halifax, whom he had never forgiven for his insults after his brother's appointment as Attorney-General. Writing to the Duchess of Marlborough, a curious choice as an intermediary, Halifax empowered her to tell both the Duke and Godolphin that he would go along with them in all things that were not contrary to his principles and the good of the country. "If the Lord Treasurer has a mind to speak with freedom to me, I will return it with great sincerity and affection, but if he has a better opinion of other sort of notions, I will give him no trouble in forcing him to hear me."

"The letter you sent me from Lord Halifax," said Godolphin in his reply to the Duchess, "ought to be kept in the first place as a curiosity, and next, because whoever could write such a letter in his present circumstances may hereafter give such provocation that one would not but have it in one's power to show so much impertinence under his own hand . . . I must own I think the impertinence greater to me than to you, but I shall not take any notice of it to him, nor ever make any court to him for his assistance, which I see by the letter he expects, but let him have his full swing with Mr. Harley and his friends, whom for seven years together he has called enemies to the government, rather than not ruin those who have done all that was possible for men to do to oblige him."

When, thanks to the agency of others, Halifax had been given the position which the Lord Treasurer and Marlborough had opposed, Godolphin, swallowing his bitter words, brought himself to believe that, possibly, it was all for the best. His awareness of the cordial relations now enjoyed by Harley and Halifax makes the political situation in 1709–10 all the more fantastic. Intrigue had become part of the life of the average politician, and with the exception of Godolphin, it is difficult to mention one statesman of note who was not engaged in planning some new political combination.

When the different pieces on the political chessboard were arranged to his satisfaction Harley proceeded to apply checkmate. On August 8th, 1710, tired, deluded Godolphin, only recently assured by Anne that it was her wish he should continue, was invited to break his staff in token of dismissal. At various intervals, the Whig Ministers, who had not adhered to Shrewsbury, followed him into retirement. Only Cowper, the Lord Keeper, was pressed to stay, and he refused. The office of Lord Treasurer was temporarily put into Commission, Harley, appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer and 2nd Lord of the Treasury, being to all intents and purposes Prime Minister. Steele heard a whisper that his friend Halifax, possibly from being seen with Harley, was to be the new Lord Treasurer, and communicated the glad tidings to his beloved Prue, but it was no truer than an earlier report

[1] Godolphin to Marlborough, July 3rd, 1710.

to the same effect.[1] One refuses to believe that Halifax and Somers had fallen victims to the same snare.

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In the course of the next four years, Halifax was to write a great many letters to his political friends and foes, the significance of which may easily be mistaken. In most cases the safest course is to treat his letters, breathing generous sentiments, as civilities committing him to very little. Thus his letter to Marlborough of August 25th, 1710, condoling with him on the dismissal of Godolphin, "an affliction which he shared", was as insincere as his claim to have striven to prevent it, and the comment based on that supposed kindly service, "If all passages were fully known you would think the part I acted towards him more grateful and more kind, than are [is] usual amongst us. But as there is generosity in acting such a part, there is good breeding and good manners in not explaining particulars that have not been successful."

All along, Halifax had known that the disgrace of Godolphin, who for months past had exercised little more than nominal power, represented the culminating point of Harley's plans, and the probabilities are that, so far from opposing what was an inevitable development, he cordially endorsed it, having nothing to gain by the contrary attitude. Harley's correspondence with the Duke of Newcastle throws a flood of light on his hopes and designs regarding Halifax. Having his eye on the great Whig magnate's only daughter, Lady Henrietta Cavendish, as a bride for his son,[2] he was unlikely to try and fool him. As far back as June 8th, 1710, or six months before the fall of Sunderland was timed to take place, he wrote to the Duke in these significant terms: "I suppose Lord Halifax will give you an account of our conversation. *I have offered myself to him very freely*,[3] and shall be heartily sorry that any artifices should overturn good purposes."

On August 5th, the eve as it were of Godolphin's dismissal—he would go on the 8th—Harley wrote again to the Duke, but not so cheerfully. It had been impossible to pin down Halifax and Cowper to more than generalizations, nor would they say how a workable Parliament was to be obtained. Perhaps when Godolphin [earlier spoken of as growing ever more sour and rude in his relations with the queen], was out, things would be more tractable.

The rift in the lute was not due to any solicitude on Halifax's part for Godolphin's fate—far from it—but to his strong objections to the dissolution of Parliament, which, since the Whigs were unwilling to join his administration, Harley regarded as the correct course to take. Besides allowing him to get rid of dead wood, it would provide him with a substantial Tory working majority. He would have preferred not to be entirely dependent on the Tories, being out of sympathy with many of their demands, but the unaccommodating stand taken up by Halifax and his friends left him no alternative. Nobody knew better than Harley that an appeal to the country

[1] News-Letter, *Harley Papers*, February 3rd, 1709. According to this the Whigs were credited with saying that Halifax would be the next Lord Treasurer.

[2] They were married on August 31st, 1713.

[3] Italics inserted by present writer.

on the twin slogans of "Peace now!" and "The Church in danger" would result in the triumph of the Church fanatics, bent on capitalizing to the full the "martyrdom" of Sacheverell, and the corresponding debacle of the persecuting "Whigs, who added to their sins by refusing to give the country peace." As he abhorred extremists in religion and politics, such a victory was unlikely to be regarded by him as an unmixed blessing; but having done his best to come to terms with the Whigs, even at the risk of offending the Tory zealots, he could console himself with the thought that his conscience was clear. For though it is fashionable to regard Harley as utterly unprincipled, signs that he was troubled with a conscience do peep out here and there, even in the most unexpected places.

Halifax had not bargained for a dissolution as the penalty for not coming to terms with Harley, and, with a view to inducing him to change his mind, he sought the mediation of the Duke of Newcastle. By playing on that grandee's fears for his possessions, and simultaneously appealing to his patriotic feelings, he hoped to get him to act the part of moderator. "Depend upon it," declared Halifax with unfeigned passion, "you are in more danger of being lost than I fancy you imagine. The folly, the rage, the despondency and despair of some, and the boldness, villainy and fury of others, will soon bring things to such a crisis that the prudence and moderation to remain on either side will be trodden underfoot and borne down the torrent. I have helped them [the Ministry] with the Bank, and preach to everybody that the public credit ought to be supported, but if they give continual alarms, make new changes and dissolve this Parliament, we must all sink."

Since the dissolution threatened to decimate the Whig ranks, Harley's oracular protestation that "a Whig game was intended at the bottom" seemed a sad piece of mockery. Halifax's colleagues, seeing him constantly closeted with the Tory leader, sniggered at the thought of anybody being so gullible as to think an honourable deal with "Robin the trickster" possible, and in token of derision nicknamed him "Van der Dusten",[1] a witticism born of his activities over the Dutch Barrier. This time they were quite wrong about Harley. He was not trying to fool them. He wanted their co-operation to save him from total dependence on the Tory wild men. But his past reputation told against him. Once a trickster, always a trickster, was the way the Whigs summed him up. They did not think he could go straight, even if he tried. So they refused to have anything to do with his overtures for a Coalition. But though unable to pledge the co-operation of his colleagues, Halifax continued his talks with the future Lord Treasurer,[2] off and on for a period of four years.

Since nothing tangible was ever achieved, it behoves us to inquire what degree of sincerity entered into these parleys and why they never came to anything. It is certain that both men, being of temperate views, were anxious to be associated in a government of moderates,[3] but that a host of difficulties

[1] *Harley Papers*, Vol. III.

[2] Harley was created Earl of Oxford and Mortimer on May 23rd, 1711, and made High Treasurer six days later.

[3] *The Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Hanmer*, by Sir Henry Bunbury, Bt.

supervened, and that only gradually were these revealed as insuperable. Harley was not enamoured of the Hanoverian succession. Had the Pretender been as willing as *Henri Quatre* to change his religion, he would have done his best to recommend him to the nation. On the other hand, Halifax, true to the principles of the Revolution, fully supported the Protestant Succession, and for personal reasons pinned his faith to the Electoral Family, under whom he hoped to achieve his ambition of being Lord Treasurer. He was all the more inclined that way, since he suspected Anne, his inveterate enemy, of secretly favouring the Pretender. Again, while Harley thought the war had gone on long enough and that nothing was to be gained from its continuance, Halifax agreed with his Whig colleagues that there could be no peace until the Bourbons cleared out of Spain. Then Harley wanted Halifax, with or without his colleagues; Halifax, thinking of his future, would not move alone. Finally, there was the difficulty, in Harley's administration, of assigning a place to Halifax which would comport with his dignity and aspirations. As Harley proposed to be Lord Treasurer, that position obviously was not available. Halifax, having necessarily to resign his lucrative sinecure on entering the Ministry, fancied no other office. So the *impasse* was inescapable.

Recognition of the tremendous obstacles in the way of an agreement could not fail to influence the nature of their communications, which at times failed to rise above the level of meaningless compliments. There were occasions when, from sheer force of habit, Harley relapsed into his customary duplicity and was met with similar guile on the part of Halifax, who was himself up to every trick on the political board. But when all is said and done, the two men did for the most part strive to overcome the grievous handicap of their circumstances and find some basis of co-operation, both being sensible that only the extremists would gain by the continuance of their conflict. A Coalition of Moderates was Harley's constant aim from 1710 onwards, and it should not be overlooked that in some respects his administration was a Coalition from the outset, including as it did the great Whig lords—Shrewsbury, Newcastle and Somerset.

Montrond, the evil genius of Talleyrand, recommended one always to beware of first impulses, as they were nearly always honourable. It is tempting, when dealing with Harley, to suggest that in his case such a warning was superfluous, all his actions being deceitful. But the truth is, he only employed deceit when fairer means were unlikely to ensure him his ends. He seems to have persuaded himself that his only hope of securing an alliance with Halifax, whom he liked and admired, lay in convincing him of his honesty of purpose, and we must assume that, apart from the regrettable lapses already alluded to, he made no attempt to hoodwink him, though the bulk of contemporary opinion takes the view that Halifax meekly allowed himself to be duped. The Duchess of Marlborough, guilty of wishful thinking, was satisfied that he had been fooled, and was confirmed in her belief by Arthur Maynwaring, the Kit-Kat Club celebrity (best known as the lover of the beautiful actress, Anne Oldfield), who, writing to Sarah on May 4th, 1711, repeated, on the authority of a friend of the Duke of Newcastle's, a number of deprecatory remarks supposed to have been made by that magnate:

"Although Lord Halifax, Lord Somers and Lord Sunderland had endeavoured to be well with him (Harley), he certainly fooled them, who were the last men in the nation he would have anything to do with, and that for Lord Halifax, he was like the fly upon the wheel that would always thrust himself upon people and fancy he did great matters, when in truth he only made himself ridiculous, and would never bring the least thing about." Maynwaring added, "I am pretty confident that all this was said by the Duke, and I have often wondered how Lord Halifax's great spirit could bear to speak again with Mr. Harley, when he had been so shamefully exposed last year about his own going to Holland, and his compounding matters at home."[1] The reference, presumably, is to Halifax, thanks to his renewed friendship with Shrewsbury, agreeing to become joint plenipotentiary for the peace.

To credit what Maynwaring's informant says, we must regard Halifax, a self-made man, as easily gulled and knowing little or nothing of Harley's reputation for duplicity; whereas he had every reason to be on his guard against him. He had already had experience of Harley's penchant for double-dealing. When he was struggling with the Dutch over the Barrier, Harley wrote to Stepney castigating their greed, but in his talks with the envoy blamed Halifax and the other Whigs for opposing the legitimate aspirations of the Dutch in order to curry favour with the English nation.

Even if he stood in any need of having his own cautious attitude reinforced, there was always Lord Cowper at hand to remind him that the leopard never changed his spots. Cowper still adhered to the opinion frankly expressed by him that January day in 1706, when he, Halifax and several of the Tory leaders had been Harley's guests at dinner, a function intended to sweeten relations between the two wings of the Coalition. What happened he recorded in his private diary. When Godolphin left, the host drank to love, friendship and everlasting union in a bumper of Tokay, drawn from the second of two bottles, which was good but thick. Harley wished there were more Tokay left, but Cowper, hitting at his dark and shifty methods, observed that white Lisbon, being very clear, was to be preferred. All understood the allusion was to Harley's humour, "which was never to deal clearly or openly, but always with reserve, if not dissimulation . . . and to love tricks even when not necessary, but from an inward satisfaction he took in applauding his own cunning. If any man was ever born under the necessity of being a knave, he was."

Only once had Halifax appeared to put more trust in Harley's word than ordinary prudence would have dictated. That was in the autumn of 1708, when both, despite their eminent talents, were out of Ministerial office. But there was this important difference: whereas Halifax nourished no immediate hope of being returned to power, the queen being dead-set against

[1] Coxe's *Marlborough*, Vol. III. Maynwaring, who seems to have essayed the difficult task of trying to be friends with both the Duchess and Halifax, spoke in favour of the statesman, when he was attacked in the Tory *Examiner*, as "one who had borrowed a good deal of wit". On the contrary, said Maynwaring, he was a person of the most prompt and ready faculties, either in business or conversation, of any man living.

the members of the Junto, Harley, encouraged by his alliance with Mrs. Masham, felt sure of a triumphant return in the not-distant future. Actuated by the sense of a common lot they gravitated towards each other, and six days before Prince George of Denmark died [October 28th, 1708] they were reported to be on the point of concluding a formal pact. But on being assured that his brother, Sir James Montague, would, after all, be made Attorney-General, Halifax abandoned the idea of deserting the Junto, which, until then, he had suspected of neglecting his interests.

Well aware that the ailing queen could not last for more than two or three years, and equally aware that the advent of the Brunswickers, so favourable to the Whig cause, would bring him into power again, he had no inducement recklessly to precipitate himself into the arms of Harley. But the idea of a Coalition of Moderates appealed to him as much as it did to Harley, and in the absence of any basis of accommodation he was still prepared to be helpful. Indeed, as he reminded Harley, Chancellor of the Exchequer and 2nd Lord of the Treasury, in virtue of his position as Auditor of the Exchequer he was obliged to give the Lords of the Treasury every possible aid. Consequently in all matters connected with the Bank, the Mint, Debt Funding and Lottery Loans (on the security of new duties on leather, hops, playing cards and postage, £3,500,000 by this means was raised) he had gladly entered into consultation with the Tory leader. But all along he had co-operated in financing the war, and as far back as 1706 had, at a dinner given at his house, inaugurated the successful campaign to provide £250,000 towards the cost of Prince Rupert's invasion of Italy. In return Harley interceded with the queen for suitable compensation to be paid Halifax's brother, when in the clean sweep of the Whigs he lost his position as Attorney-General.

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The relations of the two men were fostered by interests outside politics. That they shared the same intellectual sympathies was part of the attraction they discovered for each other. Both loved books, old and new, and found pleasure in documents bearing on our island's earliest recorded history. Brilliant classical scholars, they were never happier than when in the company of the *alumni* exchanging apt Latin tags. Temperamentally, too, they closely approximated, favouring moderation in politics, and united in seeing, as Harley put it, little difference between a mad Whig and a mad Tory. Nature intended them to be allies, but circumstances, destructive of an ideal solution, decreed they should be political foes.

The sense of mutual attraction had persisted, despite the most bitter party rancour and recrimination. Halifax, indeed, felt he had good reason for liking Harley. When it was his misfortune to come under the lash of Sir Edward Seymour, spokesman of the Tory wild men, launching the campaign which aimed at his ruin, Harley, as he afterwards discovered, had sought to exercise a restraining influence. More, had Harley been so minded he could have forestalled Halifax in the race for the Auditorship of the Exchequer, for when Sir Robert Howard lay ill, it was offered him. As his brother, Edward Harley, was already the other Auditor (there were

two) he, no doubt, concluded that the family was sufficiently served in that direction.

Nor should it be forgotten that the Harleys and Montagues had long been allied in friendship. In the fragment of autobiography published in the *Harley Papers*, the Tory leader mentions that on the Duke of Schomberg[1] going to Ireland, the Duke of Montagu [Ralph Montagu] urged old Sir Edward Harley [his father] to take over the Lieutenancy of the Ordnance, besides pressing him at different times to accept other offices. Once, visiting that charming gentleman in King Street, Montagu bumped into the future Lord Shaftesbury, author of the *Characteristics*.

From the start of Harley's administration Halifax had been careful, in all the negotiations for a Coalition, not to commit himself to anything that was unlikely to be approved by the other members of the Junto, or before taking the advice of Somers, wisest of all the Whigs, who frequently shared the confabulations with the Tory leader. Indeed, it was quite the thing for dinners to the Whig leaders at Halifax's house in New Palace Yard, or in the congenial atmosphere of Pontack's, the famous City tavern in Abchurch Lane, where the rich Whig magnates, and very occasionally Swift,[2] regaled themselves, to alternate with dinners, under Halifax's hospitable roof, to Harley, who had an uncommon appreciation of his host's cellar. There was a memorable evening when the Lord Treasurer, calling without previous warning, crashed into a Halifax meal arranged exclusively for his Whig *confrères*. His arrival, as luck would have it, coincided with that of the choleric Sunderland, victim of the 1710 eviction, who, having no desire to exchange words with his political executioner, promptly drove off again, a course which was followed by the others the moment they spotted the figure of the hated Tory leader in the doorway. Thus a dinner intended for five was reduced to a dinner for two, but was probably no less enjoyable on that account.

So much was the Lord Treasurer in the habit of dropping in on Halifax, in order to sample his excellent food and wine, that the Tory zealots began to murmur against what they described as a plot to discomfit them. Halifax thought the rumpus sufficiently important to drop Harley this line: "April 4th, 1713, the honour of your last visit gave occasion to a great many idle stories, but I hope you do not much regard such impertinence, and I am sure I would not lose an opportunity of showing my respect to you and contributing anything to your service and the establishing the queen or the Protestant succession [in order] to avoid anything can be said of me."

Incidentally, a much more dangerous caller than the Lord Treasurer was a superb lioness, which the Governor of Fort St. George sent Halifax as a present. Having no accommodation for such a beast, he begged Harley to desire the queen's acceptance of the splendid animal, and to remind her at the same time of her promise to plant some fruit trees in Bushey Park.

[1] That great soldier, Frederick Herman, Duke of Schomberg, after being created Master-General of Ordnance by William III, whom he had accompanied to England, conducted the campaign in Ireland, 1689–90, and was killed at the Battle of the Boyne.

[2] August 16th, 1711, *Journal to Stella*: I was this day in the city and dined at Pontack's with Stratford and other merchants. Pontack told us, although his wine was so good, he sold it cheaper than others; he took but seven shillings a flask.

When Harley saw what had been done [by him] to beautify the Park, he would think such encouragement more than deserved.[1]

Until the critical debate on the Peace Proposals in December, 1711, when the Government was defeated and forced to swamp further opposition in the Lords by a new creation of peers, Harley was supposed to have appreciated rather than resented Halifax's opposition to the French terms, arguing, so it was said, that thereby his hand was strengthened in the bargaining. If the Government were defeated, it was not for want of warning, for the night before the debate, Halifax, who intended to take a prominent part in the proceedings, bade him expect an adverse vote. When, following the Government defeat, Marlborough was dismissed [December 31st, 1711], Halifax could claim to have behaved with scrupulous fairness towards the Duke, whom he had no reason to love, vigorously contesting the charge that, but for him, peace would have been made after the battle of Ramillies. The attempted justification of Marlborough's disgrace by a partisan peculation charge, as mean as it was insubstantial, must have reminded Halifax of his own ordeal several years earlier.

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At this period, Halifax, who spoke in the Lords on every possible occasion, was at the height of his form as an orator, and clothed in all the authority of an elder statesman. His speech [May 28th, 1712] in arraignment of Bolingbroke's order to Ormonde, the new Commander [appointed May 10th], to avoid engaging in any siege or hazarding a battle till he had further orders from the queen, deserves quoting as an admirable example of his forensic style:

> "I pity the heroic and gallant general, who on other occasions took delight to charge the most formidable corps and the strongest squadrons, and cannot but be uneasy at being fettered with shackles and thereby prevented from reaping the glory he might well expect from leading on troops so accustomed to conquer.
>
> "I pity the Allies, who have relied upon the aid and friendship of the British nation, perceiving that what they have done at so great an expense of blood and treasure is of no effect, as they will be exposed to the revenge of that power against whom they have been so active.
>
> "I pity the queen, her royal successors and the present and future generations of Britain, when they shall find the nation deeply involved in debt and that the common enemy who occasioned it, tho' once near being sufficiently humbled, does still triumph and design their ruin, and are informed that this proceeds from the conduct of the British Cabinet in neglecting to make a right use of those advantages and happy occasions which their own courage, with God's blessing, had gained and put into their hands. I do not pretend to blame the queen, but the counsels and representations of those evil counsellors, who, being confided in by her, manifest so little concern for Her Majesty's and her people's honour,

[1] Switzer, in his *Iconographia Rustica* (Vol. I, p. 87), commends Halifax's forest work in Bushey Park.

prosperity and security, that they persuaded her to approve such measures and emit such orders as were attended with these and a great many other disgraceful and pernicious consequences."[1]

While the exchange of letters went on uninterruptedly, the two statesmen rarely missed an opportunity of meeting. Halifax's abode in New Palace Yard, being as it were, on the very doorstep of Parliament, seemed purposely contrived to make such visits easy. But politically, as if by tacit agreement, no quarter was given or asked. Harley fully understood that if Halifax and his friends could bring the Government down, they would not hesitate to do so. So far, he felt he had scored all along the line. Thanks to the creation of twelve new peers, a most drastic measure considering the temper of the times, he had obtained sufficient votes to force through the Lords the Government's peace proposals. The precedent thus established would have its influence on future legislation. As is well known, the mere threat of repeating Harley's manœuvres sufficed to carry Lord Grey's Reform Bill and Mr. Asquith's Parliament Bill. The Churchill thraldom had been broken, and both the Duke and Duchess had felt it prudent to retire into exile. Walpole,[2] more indiscreet than corrupt, had been put in the Tower also on a charge of peculation and, lacking his guidance, the opposition in the Commons was lamentably wanting in punch and drive.

The fickleness of the public was illustrated by the equanimity with which the disgrace of Marlborough had been received. But the belief that his was the chief opposition to peace had for some time past lowered him in the popular esteem. A visitor to the London theatre, where the comedy, *The Recruiting Officer*, was being staged, speaks of a song made against the Duke in the army being sung at the interval by a troop of soldiers. While Prince Eugène was extolled for his generosity, Marlborough was abused for his avarice, every verse ending with the burden, "But Marlborough not a penny!" On this particular July evening, 1710, the Duchess of Montagu, Marlborough's daughter, happened to be present and blushed scarlet. The chaffing and cheering was such that the action of the play was delayed near a quarter of an hour.[3]

Anticipating the Treaty of Utrecht, signed on March 13th, 1713, Halifax, who had exerted all his efforts to make the peace proposals disliked both in the country and in Parliament, sent Harley this remarkable letter: "December 26th, 1712. Whatever accidents or whatever fatality have, hitherto, hindered our clearly understanding each other, the loss, the misfortune, has been wholly mine. It was always my inclination to have it otherwise; 'tis my desire and 'tis my interest to obtain it by all endeavours I can use, and all service I can pay your lordship, and to show you what impression your letter has made and how fond I am to clear up any misunderstanding, I shall open to you my sentiments without caution or reserve. Your lordship tells me the dispatches from France and Spain seem

[1] Halifax's protest, though seconded by Marlborough, proved unavailing, the Government carrying the debate by 68 votes to 40.

[2] Churchill, in his *Marlborough*, Vol. IV, says Walpole's offence did not amount to more than want of delicacy and propriety.

[3] *Cambridge under Queen Anne*: Edited by J. E. B. Mayor.

to point at a steady general peace. God make it soon and lasting! I must own I think your lordship and I differed in the way of obtaining that blessing, but the scene is quite changed, my schemes are at an end, and I am neither so obstinate [n]or [so] romantic to pursue things made impracticable. All I have now at heart . . . is to see the Government firmly established and our trade encouraged and enlarged. I can never think the queen's life safe till the first is settled beyond dispute and beyond hopes of bringing us into confusion at her death, and we have merited from the French some indulgence in the latter.

"These two great points demand your lordship's care; the right settling of these will crown your reputation; and to finish this great work, if I can be of any use, command my assistance; in the one I think I could help you, and I wish to do it in the other . . . without asking conditions that shall give you any difficulties. I have been used to act a disinterested part, and you may claim my service on the same terms as others have had it."[1]

While highly gratified by the flattering sentiments conveyed in this letter, Harley did not fall into the error of believing that it heralded any slackening in the party strife. If he felt like taking Halifax's professions on this particular occasion at their full face value, he had only to look up his private letter-file for the month of April. There he would find this sobering note from John Drummond, the merchant, who at Amsterdam acted as his and Bolingbroke's agent or spy: "Lord Halifax and Lord Nottingham have a correspondence carried on here extremely to the prejudice of the public good and the queen's honour [presumably sympathising with Dutch resentment of Bolingbroke's unilateral peace negotiations with France] . . . Lord Halifax's name is much made use of, but I don't find that he had had the weakness to write himself."

Nor did Halifax's undoubted relief at the prospect of the war ending prevent him, after Utrecht, from opposing the not very popular commercial treaty with France which followed. He and Stanhope, it is almost certain, financed the *British Merchant or Commerce Preserved*, a thrice-weekly paper published in answer to Defoe's *Mercator or Commerce Reprieved*, supporting the treaty.

But nothing that he was to do in legitimate warfare was to cause Harley so much worry and embarrassment as his various moves to test the strength of the Lord Treasurer's affection for the Electoral Family. In April of that same year (1713), he and his colleagues, dining together, decided that their most hopeful and profitable course was to persuade the Electoral Prince [George II.], grandson of the Electress Sophia, to come to England, "as an infallible remedy against present evil". So enamoured was Halifax of the idea that he went to the length of advising that the Prince should come first under an assumed name and with a false passport, accompanied only by a *valet de chambre* and two unliveried footmen, leaving behind his Order of the Garter and taking his passage in a pacquet boat.[2] If the Prince could come over that winter he would answer for it, he told the Electoral Family,

[1] Unless indicated otherwise, all letters to and from Harley and Halifax are to be found in the *Bath Papers*, 6 Vols.

[2] *Macpherson State Papers*, Vol. II, p. 492.

that the Ministry would be overturned.[1] However, the Elector [George I.] thought such a step most imprudent and so nothing was done.

Not to be baulked, Halifax and his colleagues tried again the following year [1714]. This time they worked on the feelings of both the aged Electress and Baron Schütz, the Hanoverian Envoy, to such a degree that the latter was persuaded to inquire why the Electoral Prince as Duke of Cambridge had not received his writ of summons to attend the queen in Parliament. Anne, supported by Bolingbroke, regarded the request as an attempt to establish a rival court under her very nose, and was in favour of curtly refusing it. Loth as they were to issue the writ, the Cabinet, however, felt that if they were to avoid a breach of privilege they had no alternative but to do as asked.

Very angry, the queen told the Elector that the coming of his son would be an infringement of her sovereignty such as he would not wish to happen in his own case. The Elector affirmed his previous decision and his son remained in Hanover.

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Halifax pitched his expectations high in the event of a Guelph being the next sovereign; he had every excuse, seeing what a brilliant future the flattering attentions of the Electoral Family seemed to augur for him. When in August, 1713, Schütz arrived from Hanover, his instructions from the Elector were not to undertake anything without consulting their known friends, beginning with Lord Halifax, " a man of eminent ability, wise and moderate ", who had the interests of the Electoral Family at heart.[2] He found Halifax as obliging and as well-informed as he had been led to believe. As a result, he was able to keep in touch with all the Jacobite moves and, not least, the supposed plans of Bolingbroke, in whom the supporters of the Stuart cause vested their hopes. Halifax would have been better pleased had the Elector, a true son of his mother, been less stingy with his money. When invited to contribute £100,000 to the Whig party fund to facilitate the purchase of seats at the forthcoming election, he brusquely replied that he would give nothing. Consequently, the Whig chances of retrieving their Parliamentary losses were baulked, and the sulphuric remarks of the Junto leaders bore witness to their chagrin.

As Harley, deserted by Mrs. Masham, who had been bought by Bolingbroke, busy preparing his leader's ruin (an old English custom much practised by seventeenth and eighteenth-century politicians) declined in favour with the changeable queen, and the stock of the Secretary, her latest political charmer, correspondingly rose, he began to shed his tenderness for The Pretender, which of late had been no more than a ruse to retain Anne's goodwill, and to assure the Hanoverian representative that he could be relied on to work hard and loyally for the Hanoverian succession. The offer of a reward of £100,000 for the apprehension of The Pretender, if he should dare land here or in Ireland, seemed good enough proof of his sincerity. Baron Bothmer, the hard, unsentimental envoy, however, refused to be

[1, 2] *The Beginning of the Hanoverian Dynasty*, by Prof. Wolfgang Michael

impressed, averring that one had always to count on his inscrutable duplicity and perfidy.

Had he thought it safe to put in a seasonable word for the Lord Treasurer, Halifax would have done so, but he was not sure that Harley was doing more than pay lip-service to the Electoral Family. Moreover, he was beginning to suspect that Harley's day was done. Driven to various legislative measures of which he disapproved, instead of actively shaping the course of events, the once alert Lord Treasurer confronted the deadly challenge of Bolingbroke with wits muddled by indulgence in the bottle and dulled by failing health.

It was not a spectacle to bring Halifax or any of his colleagues much comfort, the last thing they wanted to see being Bolingbroke, with his vast capacity for mischief, installed in complete power. What particularly annoyed them was to see the formerly astute strategist gratuitously opening his defences to the man palpably bent on ousting him from the leadership of the Government. Halifax did his best to induce Harley (labelled by the Tory extremists "the Presbyterian rogue") to make a fight for it. The Tory leader's one chance of survival, he preached, was to put the national before the party interests and stoutly to oppose Bolingbroke, especially over the cruel and reactionary Schism Bill, designed to deprive Dissenters of the right to choose for their children schoolmasters other than those licensed by the Bishop. On showing the necessary courage, Harley was promised the Whig support. "If I am any judge of opportunities," Halifax wrote him, "your enemies have thrown such a game into your hands as never happened to any man before, and is the peculiar happiness of my Lord Oxford [Harley's title]. I beg you to make use of this conjunction, which is most favourable, too, in all respects to save your country. If you will name the time when you will be at St. James's, I will attend you and come disposed to join in any measures you shall direct, or prepared to offer such a scheme as may save this kingdom from destruction and ruin."

Sorely tempted as Harley was to take Halifax's advice, he quailed before the risks involved. He would have split his party, and with the queen dead-set against him, so far from surviving, he would have sealed his own death-warrant. So he meekly acquiesced in the Bill and kept himself in office a few weeks longer, though at the price of revolting his wife and family who were loyal Presbyterians. Thanks, however, to a series of castrating amendments which Halifax got the Lords to endorse, the measure in its final form was robbed of much of its sting.

Seeking to keep Harley to the path of wisdom, Halifax himself was not so surefooted as occasionally not to avoid stumbling by the way. Irritated by the Scots' dissatisfaction with the tax on malt (the same as in England), he thought the Union, which he had laboured so hard to bring about, should be dissolved, saying that some people agreed better when asunder than when together, and that might well apply to the two nations.

Instead of restoring Harley's self-confidence by cheerful messages, he sent him letters calculated to plunge him into inspissated gloom. "We are the most unhappy nation under the sun, running into inevitable destruction,

though we all profess to mean the same thing," was a typical sentence. Harley, however, was past being responsive to words either of encouragement or reproach. Bolingbroke had him by the throat, and he knew it. The end, when signalled, came with the sudden brutality characteristic of the stoutish lady who was the arbiter of the fate of her Ministers, mean or great. On July 27th, Harley was ordered to deliver up his white staff, and though possibly guilty of shocking bad manners, he is, in our opinion, to be admired for telling Bolingbroke, a far from gentle Judas, in the royal presence what he thought of him.

So the most adroit political manipulator of his age was added to the men disgraced by this narrow-minded, not very intelligent queen, a list which included Somers, the ablest constitutional lawyer of his day, Halifax, the most brilliant financier, Godolphin, the most scrupulous and unselfish Minister ever to serve her, Marlborough (with the exception of Newton), the greatest living Englishman.

Bolingbroke's triumph was soon over. The queen had only three days to live, and, as he afterwards confessed, he needed six weeks to become master of the situation. While he had no plan of campaign ready, the Whig Lords, acting in conjunction with Stanhope, who had been content to serve under Harley, were ready to act, even to the extent of armed resistance in case the Secretary should be rash enough to proclaim The Pretender king.[1]

Warned that the queen was dying and that a meeting of the Privy Council was to be held at Kensington on the morning of July 30th, Somerset, primed by his wife, Ralph Montagu's red-haired stepdaughter, who was still Mistress of the Robes, together with Argyll, resolved to put in an appearance, though not formally invited. Argyll explained that he felt the Council would be grateful for the benefit of his advice. The pair, having been welcomed by Shrewsbury, the Lord Chamberlain, proceeded to add to the consternation caused by their unexpected arrival by proposing that the " King of Hearts " should be recommended to the queen as Lord Treasurer. Bolingbroke, his nerve seemingly paralysed, felt unable to object. Told that this was the Privy Council's unanimous choice, Anne, whose strength was fast ebbing away, handed the white staff to Shrewsbury, the last Lord Treasurer that England was ever to know.

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Anne died early on the morning of August 1st [1714]. The Regency, which included Halifax, was set up, George I. was proclaimed king, and all necessary measures taken to ensure the peace of the Realm. Pending the king's arrival, which was delayed until October 1st, Halifax gave full rein to his most roseate fancies. Convinced that he would be appointed Lord Treasurer, he is said to have gone to the length of promising to make Addison Secretary of State. Great was his mortification to learn that he was only to be First Lord of the Treasury, and not even head of the Government, that position,

[1] If Lord Chesterfield is to be believed, Stanhope was the inspiring genius of the Whig preparations for armed resistance. Aided by friends of the Protestant succession, previously assembled in the famous duelling grounds behind Montagu House, he proposed arresting the leading Jacobites, while Lieut.-General William Cadogan, veteran of Marlborough's wars, seized the Tower.

by virtue of his appointment as Secretary of State, going to Lord Townshend, much his inferior in ability and experience. Understandably, he felt he had been cheated out of his proper deserts, and that all his sacrifices on behalf of the Electoral Family, including any hope of enjoying Anne's favour, had counted for little or nothing.

Curiously enough, his ability and standing, so far from proving an asset, were to prejudice him in the eyes of George I. and his realistic advisers. In their business-like and unsentimental way, they reckoned that a man of his known ambitions and assertiveness, if placed at the head of affairs with the rank of Lord Treasurer, might not prove fully tractable to the king, strange as he was to his new surroundings. Furthermore, they took it to be an act of common prudence to curb the pretensions of the members of the Junto; hence the decision to put the office of Lord Treasurer[1] into commission, reduce the principal members of government to the same level of importance, and allow them to fight out among themselves the question of supremacy.

Though starting deliberately handicapped, Halifax, intent on being top-dog, strove to impose his policy on the Cabinet, with the result that there was endless friction between him and the others, notably Marlborough, once more Capt.-General of the Forces and Master of the Ordnance, though not nearly so important as formerly; Townshend, who had the support of his brother-in-law, Walpole, Paymaster to the Forces, and Shrewsbury, back once more in the single rôle of Lord Chamberlain. Somers, who might have been a factor for peace, remained outside the Government, prostrate from a paralytic seizure.

In the sense of feeling themselves slighted, Halifax and Shrewsbury were on common ground, but, strangely enough, that did not draw them together. Drummond spoke no more than the truth when, in March, 1715, he told Lord Oxford, viewing the situation with philosophical disinterestedness, that Shrewsbury was full of resentment and only kept in the Government by the influence of Albemarle, and that Lord Halifax felt he was ill-treated.[2]

As head of the Treasury, Halifax made the most of his position, and he told Shrewsbury, rather churlishly, that if he persisted in choosing Sebastian Ricci to paint the ceiling of the Princess's bedroom at Hampton Court, instead of Sir James Thornhill, his own nominee, he would not authorise payment. The warning proved sufficient and the Englishman got the work.

It was unfortunate for Halifax that Bernstorff, the Hanoverian Minister, who had joined the king in London, preferred Townshend, who treated him with great tact and deference. Being friendly with Bernstorff meant being in the good books of Robethon, the Huguenot adventurer who acted as his understudy and often as his inspiration, and that, in turn, was a guarantee of good treatment from Bothmer, successor to Schütz.[3] Thus Townshend could congratulate himself on being in a position strong enough to hold his own against Halifax.

[1] It is a curious commentary on the illogical workings of history, that the three men most fitted by their financial talents to be Lord Treasurer—Halifax, Walpole, and Chatham—were never appointed.

[2] *Harley Papers.*

[3] Schütz lost his job for being over-zealous in the matter of the writ for the Electoral Prince.

Had Halifax cared to fling his wealth about he might have got Bothmer and Robethon on his side, for both loved the feel of gold and were most active in filling their pockets. Robethon was probably the bigger rascal of the two. He "used his influence with the king to his own advantage, the bad sides of his nature were notorious, and the Princess of Wales called him a knave."[1] John Ker of Kersland in his *Memoirs* relates having been told that he could not succeed if he made not Robethon his friend by a present of 500 guineas, because he had such prodigious influence with Bernstorff, while in her *Diary* Lady Cowper speaks of his procuring for £1,800 the lucrative appointment of the Clerk of the Parliament for the two sons of Spencer Cowper, M.P.

His failure to be appointed Lord Treasurer convinced Halifax's fellow-Ministers that his pretensions had been decisively curtailed and that it was safe to regard him as a back-number; wherefore they intrigued to widen the breach between him and Bernstorff, making much of the prolonged talks he had had with Harley, whom he was obviously reluctant to impeach for his part in the peace. Lord Dupplin (later Earl of Kinnoull), Harley's son-in-law, remained Teller in the Exchequer, and because Halifax seemed slow in evicting him to make room for Sir Roger Mostyn, that job-seeker's father-in-law, Lord Nottingham, Lord President of the Council, endeavoured to prejudice the king against his colleague.

As Halifax had been maladroit enough to offend the Princess of Wales, though later able to satisfy her on all points, his position was far from being a bed of roses. And, to make matters worse, he was continually receiving hints from Bernstorff, obviously prompted by Townshend as well as Marlborough who was in the habit of seeing him privately, that the quarrels between the Ministers could not go on any longer, as though he were the prime cause of them. Without a single friend in the Ministry, and hard pressed by Townshend, who had Walpole to advise him, Halifax, who had built so much on the advent of the Electoral Family, needed all his strength of mind to avoid losing countenance.

Since keeping up the correspondence with Harley clearly meant playing into the hands of his enemies, Halifax ceased to write to him after October 28th, 1714. His last letter concerned Lord Dupplin, whom Nottingham was trying to force out of his comfortable job. Though cautiously worded, it indicated how much Halifax would have liked to serve Harley, had it been at all possible.

In his disgruntled state he found considerable comfort in the unqualified homage of the literary brotherhood, who took his return to Ministerial office to signify a revival of the old serviceable patronage. Their open delight in his resumption of power, which, not knowing the facts, they were inclined to exaggerate, was balm to his wounded pride. With Harley and Bolingbroke in disgrace, he remained the sole friend of needy genius with jobs at his disposal. To be regarded as the patron of Addison, Steele, Congreve and Pope was possibly a greater distinction than commanding the favour of George I. It was unfortunate that, placed as he was, his power to help his literary friends was much more limited than they believed.

[1] *The Beginning of the Hanoverian Dynasty.*

Among the first to appeal to him for succour was Addison, who, at the close of his appointment as Secretary to the Regency Council [obtained through Halifax], had been made Secretary to the Viceroy of Ireland. He, no more than Swift, relished being exiled, and thought his old patron might find a more suitable opening for his talents. He would have liked Lowndes' place at the Treasury, but Halifax, faithful to the policy of employing in that department only men up to their work,[1] was forced to say "No". Addison was sure that if the king were aware how little, monetarily, he had benefited from the various services he had performed for the Crown, not £5,000 in all and a quarter gone in election expenses, he would be properly provided for. Halifax thought the Board of Trade might yield the desired opening, but when this failed, Addison, rather inconsiderately, adopted an injured tone. "I now begin to look upon myself like an old sergeant or corporal," he wrote . . . "If I am offered less than a thousand pounds (a year) I shall beg leave not to accept it, since it will look more like a clerk's wages than a mark of His Majesty's favour." He finished up by proclaiming Halifax the only patron he gloried in and had a dependence on.[2]

Halifax's reply was a mixture of remonstrance and flattery: "Thou hast now the best right of any man in England to be Secretary of State; nay it will be a sort of displacing of thee not to make thee so. If thou could'st but get over that silly sheepishness of thine that makes thee sit in the House and hear a fellow prate for half an hour who has not a tenth part of thy good sense, I should be glad to see it so." Only death, it is clear, prevented Halifax from finding the amiable essayist a position to his liking.

Warm-hearted, lovable, dissipated and incurably extravagant Dicky Steele, who almost to the same extent had relied on Halifax, fared rather better, though in a more modest way, from the accession of his Protestant hero, George I., and the return to office of his patron, Halifax. His initial prizes—surveyor of the royal mews at Hampton Court, deputy to Lord Clare, Lord Lieutenant of Middlesex, and J.P.—were scarcely important enough to rank as more than a promise of future favours, but a knighthood and a seat in the king's first Parliament put him on good terms with himself. The royal mews appointment was particularly welcome, since it gave him an excuse for going down to Hampton Court and sharing Halifax's liberal table. What a feast of mirth and reason the conversation must have been, when, as so often happened at Halifax's Wednesday afternoon dinners, Steele was joined by Addison and Maynwaring!

For a time, Steele's correspondence with his wife Prue had been chiefly remarkable for ingenious apologies for his lateness or absence on account of being detained by Halifax. One, obviously indited when he had drunk deeply of the peer's port, ended with the loving message, "For thee I dye, for thee I languish"; another had the flavouring of *The Arabian*

[1] In a letter to Harley (December 27th, 1712), Halifax strongly advised him to see that the under-officials in the Exchequer, where there was a great office to be filled, knew their business and were capable of discharging so great a trust with skill and fidelity. "I have seen," he added, "much fatal consequences from partiality or covetousness in the disposal of these modern offices that I can't help advising your lordship to guard us against such misfortunes."

[2] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 7121.

Nights' Entertainments, as witness: "Dearest wife. The finest woman in nature should not detain me an hour from you, but you must sometimes suffer the rivalry of the wisest men. Lord Halifax and Lord Somers leave this place (Hampton Court) after dinner." Who could be angry with so cajoling and so apparently artless a spouse?

In his anxiety to be near Halifax, to whom in his newspaper activities on behalf of the Whig cause he looked for guidance, if not direction [Steele liked to retain his independence], he had taken a cottage with a garden at Hampton Wick, and, by way of contrast with the Palace, had christened the abode *The Hovel*. As Ranger of Hampton Court and Bushey Park, Halifax had quarters in both places, in addition to his own separate abode on the river. Having already an address in Bury Street, Steele was rash to indulge in such an extravagance as a river cottage. But sound finance was never one of his strong points, and he was not surprised when Addison, who had lent him £1,000 on the strength of the house and furniture, sold him up as the best means of awakening him from his ruinous lethargy.

While at *The Hovel*, Steele dedicated to Halifax the last volume of *The Tatler*, the accompanying letter being typical of the spirit of the man: "I could not but indulge a certain vanity in dating from this little covert where I have frequently had the honour of your lordship's company, and received from you very many obligations. The elegant solitude of this place and the greatest pleasures of it, I owe to its being so near those beautiful manors wherein you sometimes reside. It is not retiring from the world, but enjoying its most valuable blessings, when a man is permitted to share in your lordship's conversation in the country."

Halifax had come to know Steele through Addison, a friend of his [Steele's] Oxford days, and had introduced him to public life, first in August, 1706, as Gentleman-Usher to that good-tempered bore, Prince George of Denmark, and in May, 1707, as Gazetteer, under Lord Sunderland, to the Whigs, the idea being to train him as one of the party's leading press propagandists. Thereafter, in all the embarrassments arising out of the excess of his careless, impulsive way of living, Steele, never free from the dread of a visit from the bailiffs, looked to Halifax for partial, if not complete, deliverance. Taught by his experience of impecunious scribes what to expect, the statesman was not surprised to receive, early in October, 1709, following a dinner which he had given him and Addison, this plaintive appeal: "My little affairs are in such distraction till I can come to an hearing in Chancery (upon articles for the sale of my estate) that I am at this time in danger of being torn to pieces for £150. If your Lordship can be so good as to forgive me this trespass upon the great humanity and condescension with which you have ever treated me, and please to accommodate me with this sum, it shall be returned in a short time with great thankfulness."

Elected M.P. for Stockbridge in 1713, he had later been expelled by the Tory House of Commons for scandalous and seditious libels, having dared in two publications, *The Crisis* and *The Englishman*,[1] to indict Ministers

[1] Swift had answered with *The Public Spirit of the Whigs*, a clever but bitter attack on the Scottish nation, against which Halifax and other Whig leaders had vehemently protested.

for endangering the Hanoverian succession, strictures which had given great offence to the queen, to whom the very mention of the Electoral Family was anathema. All the time he was the Whig party's chief journalist and throughout his trying ordeal, he had adhered scrupulously to the advice of Halifax, though nothing that that statesman's ingenuity could suggest availed to save him. Both Swift and Defoe were in the other camp and helped towards his undoing. Defoe was so unfriendly as to urge the prosecution, telling Harley that if the virulent writings of this man were not to be voted seditious, none might. Swift's opinion of Steele was conveyed in these rather harsh lines: " I never knew him taxed with ill nature, which hath made me wonder how ingratitude came to be his prevalent vice. . . . Being the most imprudent man alive, he never follows the advice of his friends, but is wholly at the mercy of fools or knaves." In which category did Swift place Halifax?

With the turn of the political tide (the rise of the Whigs and the fall of the Tories), Prior had again brought himself under the notice of Halifax, this time as a creditor of the Treasury who could not get his money. From July, 1711, until the fall of Bolingbroke and the Tories, he had been engaged more or less either in negotiations for what came to be known as " Matt's Peace ", or, following the departure of Shrewsbury in 1713, as Acting Ambassador in Paris. What he now sought to recover were his expenses and allowances. He had been assured by Sir James Montague that Halifax would, at least, treat his demand sympathetically. But the actual reply he got was scarcely encouraging. He had inquired at the same time about his Commissionership in the Customs, and been told it could not be restored and that he was wrong to raise contentious issues. However, in February, 1715, Halifax arranged he should be paid the sum of £2,408, remarking, " 'twill be a great pleasure to me in particular to hasten your return from an unhappy and uneasy state to your own country and friends, in which number I desire you will rank me." When he wrote this letter, he could hardly have known that as soon as Prior got back [March, 1715], he would be impeached by Walpole.[1]

Whether Halifax ever fully forgave Prior for going over to the Tories and turning on him is a question never likely to be satisfactorily answered. Off and on, for years, Prior had been seeking to recover lost ground with his " fellow-mouse ". In 1709 he had plucked up sufficient courage to call on his old friend, ostensibly to inquire whether he had carried out his promise to correct the impression in the minds of Marlborough and his wife that he (Prior) had calumniated the Duke. That a convenient opportunity had not yet presented itself, was all the answer he got. " Is this a great man?" asked the poet [in his Diary].[2]

Four years later, when Prior was to all intents and purposes Ambassador in Paris, and in a position to confer rather than demand favours, he did Halifax a good gardening turn. The letter he received from the statesman is interesting as an example of the efficiency with which Halifax carried

[1] Prior remained in custody until 1717. Helped by the Harley family and the sale of his books, he managed to live fairly comfortably till the end of his days in 1721.

[2] *Welbeck Papers*, edited by A. S. Strong.

out any undertaking, from banking to afforestation, to which he applied himself: " You told me you were acquainted with Frère François who wrote in *Jardinier Solitaire*. . . . I have planted a garden of four acres at Bushey exactly upon his plan and design. But I have a greater scheme in my head. I have a farm at Apscourt [Walton-on-Thames] of a hundred acres, all within a wall; it was formerly a seat, but the house is pulled down. The soil is perhaps the best in England for fruit, as appears by what is planted, and I would turn the whole into gardens and orchards for fruit. People would persuade me there are as good trees to be had here as in France, but their trees suffered much by hard frost. I would willingly try the experiment and make this plantation, by your assistance, for if my ground should agree with the trees (and they tell me 'tis not unlike the French soil), I should have better fruit than anybody. . . . Having thus opened my grand design, I desire that you will at leisure, and to unload your mind, discourse Frère François or the learned in these affairs, and give me your thoughts upon it."

Prior, having faithfully carried out Halifax's wishes, received from him a grateful letter. The fruit trees had arrived in good condition and been planted at Bushey, but he wished that the memorandum of the cost of the contemplated plantation had been sent with them. In the course of the letter, Halifax made it clear that whatever services Prior had rendered him should be on a strictly business basis. He had received a gift of melon-seed which he proposed trying that year, and he hoped that Prior would furnish him with some seed of the herbs commonly used for " salating ". If raised from their seed here the herbs soon degenerated. As some sort of return for Prior's trouble, Halifax suggested sending him some malt drink.

The attractive qualities of Prior should not blind us to his faults, or lead us into thinking Halifax behaved in any way harshly towards him. Ingratitude, which Swift wrongly charged to the account of Steele, was his chief failing. He intrigued against Godolphin who had given him his place at the Board of Trade, and subsequently was responsible for malevolent attacks in *The Examiner* on Marlborough, whom originally he had been employed to extol. How, in face of the damning evidence, Halifax was to convince the Churchills they were mistaken in Prior is difficult to say. As for his behaviour to Halifax, it is clear that, having once gone over to the Tories, he had little or no use for his old friend and only sought him out when it suited his purpose, or when he was left with no other alternative.

. . . . . .

Among the last of the letters which Halifax was to write Harley before his fall was one dated May 13th, 1714, on behalf of Congreve. Concerned over his eyes and generally out of sorts, the playwright wanted to be reassured as to the safety of his sinecure, the Commissionership of Wine licences, valued at £200 a year, which he had been given in 1705. " Poor Congreve," wrote Halifax, genuinely moved, " is again alarmed. . . . He does not doubt the continuance of your lordship's favour to him, depending on the assurances you have given him, as well as me, of your care and protection

of him. But I beg you will enable me to ease him entirely of his fears." Scholarly Harley, always well disposed towards literary men of genius, endorsed Halifax's letter: "Mr. Congreve—answered that night." In his reply he had recourse to the apt and comforting lines in Virgil's *Aeneid* (Book I, lines 567–8):

> Non obtusa adeo gestamus pectora Poeni
> Nec tam aversus equos Tyriâ sol jungit ab urbe.
>
> Not so dull our Punic hearts,
> And not so far from this Tyrian city does the sun yoke his steeds.[1]

Back at the Treasury, Halifax was once more able to look after his old favourite. He arranged for Congreve to be appointed Secretary to Jamaica with a salary of £700 a year, and a Searcher at the Customs, which may have been worth a few pounds more. As both offices could be filled by deputies, they entailed no strain either on Congreve's time or strength. It was the final kindness which he was to owe to Halifax. Soon after the production of his first play, he had received from him a Commissionership for licensing hackney coaches, which added a useful £100 a year to his small income. Later came a Customs position worth another £24 a year, and the managership of the Malt Lottery, which, while it lasted, meant the round sum of £100; finally, through Halifax's influence, he had received the Commissionership for Wines. All these emoluments may seem small, but, judged in relation to Congreve's total income, they were not inconsiderable.

Halifax liked not only Congreve, but his charming friend, the beautifully-shaped actress, Anne Bracegirdle, whom, with her luxuriant, soft, dark brown hair, black sparkling eyes, fresh blushing complexion, even white teeth, few could resist. In the spring of 1701 she played Venus in Congreve's masque, *The Judgement of Paris*, and a record of Halifax's interest in the production is to be found in the letter discussing the music, addressed to him that year by his schoolboy friend, George Stepney, then Envoy to Vienna.

Over a bottle of wine, Halifax, Dorset and Devonshire joined, one day, in praising the actress's *virtuous* behaviour. "Come," said Halifax, "you all commend her virtue, but why do we not present this incomparable woman with something worthy of her acceptance?" Suiting actions to words, he deposited 200 guineas on the table. This sum the other nobles present made up to £800, and then sent along to her with a note complimenting her on her admirable reputation.[2]

Anne Bracegirdle was virtuous not in any absolute sense, but relative to her companions on the stage, compared with whom she was almost modest and virginal. To regard her as entirely chaste would be to ignore her relations with Congreve, Lord Scarsdale, his successor, and others. Incidentally, it is worthy of note that in 1692, when he was a rising politician, Halifax acted as one of two sureties for Lord Mohun, arrested for complicity

[1] Loeb Library translation. Swift to Pope, January 10th, 1722 (Swift Corr.: edited by F. Elrington Ball).

[2] *The Life of Colley Cibber*, by Robert W. Lowe.

in the murder of the actor, William Mountfort, whose interference, so his actual slayer, Captain Hill, supposed, prevented him from marrying her.[1]

Halifax endeavoured to be no less kind to Pope. As indicated in the only recorded letter to pass between them, he sought that same year, when besieged by a host of needy writers, to secure him a pension, and, had he lived a year longer, would undoubtedly have succeeded in his purpose, though Spence, on the strength of some remark uttered by Pope, makes light of the proposed benefaction. Pope's letter, dated December 1st, 1714, is proof that he was as ready to ladle out flattery as other applicants for Halifax's bounty:

"My Lord.—While you are doing justice to all the world, I beg you will not forget *Homer* [Pope's translation], if you can spare an hour to attend his cause. I leave him with you in that hope, and return home full of acknowledgements for the favours your Lordship has done me, and for those you are pleased to intend me. I distrust neither your will nor your memory, when it is to do good, and if ever I become troublesome or solicitous, it must not be out of expectation, but out of gratitude. Your Lordship may either cause me to live agreeably in the Town[e] or contentedly in the country; which is really all the difference I set[t] between an easy Fortune and a small one. It is, indeed, a high strain of generosity in you, to think of making me easee all my life, only because I have been so happy as to divert you an hour or two; but if I may have leave to add, because you think me no enemy to my country, there will appear a better Reason, for I must be, of consequence, as I sincerely am, my Lord, your most obliged, most obedient and faithful humble servant."[2]

As Pope acknowledged in his dedication, Halifax had been one of the first to favour him by subscribing for ten sets of the *Iliad* at the not inconsiderable figure of 6 guineas a set, a compliment magnificent enough for Swift to comment on. The only explanation that Pope's editors and biographers can find for his subsequent sneers is pique at Halifax's patronage of Tickell, who had dedicated to him his own translation of the *Iliad*.

At the start of his career, Pope had been pleased to have Halifax's opinion of his youthful compositions, but the complimentary mention of him in the *Epilogue to the Satires* [Dialogue II], as Elwin and Courthope point out in their monumental edition, was made only for the poet's own glorification:

> But does the Court a worthy man remove ?
> That instant I declare he has my love :
> I shun his zenith, court his mild decline ;
> Thus Somers once, and Halifax, were mine.

After the phrase, "I distrust neither your will nor your memory when it is to do good", in the letter already quoted, his contemptuous dismissal of Halifax as Bufo who "helped to bury whom he helped to starve", is as

[1] *A Noble Rake*. The life of Charles, 4th Lord Mohun, by Dr. R. S. Forsyth, Harvard Press, 1928.

[2] Elwin's and Courthope's *Pope*.

hard to account for as the belittling lines in *Vers de Societé*, written soon after Halifax's death:

> The love of arts lies cold and dead
> In Halifax's urn :
> But not one Muse of all he fed
> Has yet the grace to mourn.

Besides being slighting, they were untrue, for it is certain that Addison, Congreve, Steele and Tickell mourned his loss.

The identification of Halifax with Bufo was beyond doubt an afterthought on Pope's part. Bubb Dodington, the notorious flunkey, who passed for being a patron of the arts and finished up as Baron Melcombe, was the person whom he originally intended to castigate. Soon he must have realised that, as applied to Dodington, the satire[1] was full of faults, not the least being the representation of him as a Maecenas in Addison's time, and might better fit in with the character of Halifax as pictured by his enemies. Moreover, the readaptation was quite safe, Halifax being in his grave and therefore quite unable to hit back. Accordingly in the second edition, to give verisimilitude to the substitution and destroy the effect of such lines as " Horace and he went hand in hand in song ", which could only refer to Dodington, he added the cruel lines connecting Halifax with Dryden; though it is obvious that after the parody of *The Hind and The Panther*, Dryden, a proud man, would have died rather than solicit his burlesquer's patronage.

Here are the offending lines, as clever as they are ill-natured, a caricature rather than a portrait of the man defamed:

> Proud as Apollo on his forked hill,
> Sat full-blown Bufo, puffed by every quill ;
> Fed with soft dedication all day long,
> Horace and he went hand in hand in song.
> His library (where busts of poets dead
> And a true Pindar stood without a head)
> Received of wits an undistinguished race,
> Who first his judgment asked, and then a place :
> Much they extolled his pictures, much his seat,
> And flattered every day, and some days eat :
> Till grown more frugal in his riper days,
> He paid some bards with port, and some with praise,
> To some a dry rehearsal was assigned,
> And others (harder still) he paid in kind.
> Dryden alone (what wonder ?) came not nigh,
> Dryden alone escaped his judging eye :
> But still the great have kindness in reserve,
> He helped to bury whom he helped to starve.[2]

All that was needed to complete the " unmasking " of Halifax was the contribution of Joseph Spence, the anecdotist, Pope's great friend, designed to show that " Bufo " was no more than a pretender to taste and learning. It seems that at Halifax's request, Pope, in the presence of Addison,

[1] Contained in *The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* : *Being Prologue to the Satires.*

[2] A sarcastic reference to Halifax helping to pay for Dryden's monument in Westminster Abbey.

Congreve and Dr. Garth, read to him parts of his *Homer*. During the reading, Halifax four or five times stopped the poet with the remark, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Pope, but there is something in that passage that does not quite please me. Be so good as to mark the place and consider it a little more at your leisure. I am sure you can give it a better turn." Driving home with Garth, who was much amused to find him so embarrassed, Pope expressed himself mystified at Halifax's remarks, as he did not think the critical passages could be bettered. Garth reassured him. "All you need," he told him, "is to leave them just as they are. Call on Lord Halifax two or three months hence; thank him for his kind observations on those passages and read them to him as altered." Pope did as he was told. "Aye now, Mr. Pope," remarked the delighted peer, "they are perfectly right: nothing can be better." It is an amusing anecdote which, however, proves nothing. To have been among the first to recognise the worth of Defoe, Swift, Addison, Congreve, Steele and Pope, to mention but a few of the poets whom he patronised, Halifax must have had a keenly-instructed sense, amounting to inspiration, of what constituted literary genius.

. . . . . .

Halifax's greatest disappointment, in the rôle of Maecenas, was his failure to retain the friendship of Swift, though, surprisingly enough, the Dean remained throughout on the most cordial terms with Catharine Barton, the statesman's most intimate woman friend. In common with the other members of the Junto, Halifax has been blamed for not fully realising Swift's worth as a propagandist, but having regard to his persistent attempts to induce him to be his guest at Hampton Court, it is difficult to justify the censure.

The fault was entirely Swift's. He thought the Whigs were making no real attempt to have him appointed an English dean or bishop, almost impossible in face of the queen's disapproval of him, and he vented his spleen on Halifax, the mouthpiece of the Junto. Fairness was never a marked quality of Swift's, or else he would have spared the Whig statesman his wrath. In 1709–10, when he and Halifax were most friendly, the latter held no Ministerial office, and was just as much in the bad books of Anne as the author of *The Tale of a Tub*, that powerful satire on corruption in religion and learning which she looked upon as a witty but profane performance. Even when Swift ratted to the Tories, after refusing to drink to the resurrection of the Whigs unless it were accompanied by their reformation, and could plume himself on being treated on an equality with Harley and Bolingbroke, all he would have to thank them for was an Irish deanery, and they, if anybody, could be expected to overcome Anne's dislike of him.

It was in 1701 that Halifax and Swift originally got to know each other. The future Dean of St. Patrick's had published his first pamphlet, *The Dissensions in Athens and Rome*, in which Halifax and Somers, thinly disguised by Roman names, were held up as patriots deserving of every praise. But not until the summer of 1709 did their acquaintance broaden into actual friendship. Then, reminding Halifax that his hopes of preferment in the Church had still to fructify, Swift showered on the statesman the

most extravagant compliments, which his later assertions, steeped in vinegar, went far to mock and belie. On the man whom on June 13th, 1709, he proclaimed as "having fifty times more wit than all of us together", he was subsequently to pass this sour judgment: "I never heard him say one good thing, or seem to taste what was said by another." Of the man he was to describe on October 2nd, 1710, as the only Whig in England whom he loved and admired,[1] he was later to say that his encouragement of learning and learned men was confined to good words and dinners,[2] a remark prompted by Macky's tribute to Halifax as a patron of the muses and a great encourager of learning and learned men.

The only letter which Swift did not destroy (as he told his great friend and admirer, the ever-fascinating Lady Betty Germaine), he endorsed, "I kept this letter as a true original of Courtiers and Court promises." It had been written by Halifax in genuine contriteness of heart on being reminded by Addison, lately returned from Ireland where he had been acting as Secretary to the Viceroy, Lord Wharton, that Swift was angry at being left to rust in lonely Laracor. He was ashamed to see him left in a place so incapable of testing him, and to see so much merit and great qualities go unrewarded. Swift could be assured of his genuine concern for his interests, and his unalterable friendship.[3] That there was a world of difference between what the Dean chose to say of Halifax's letter at the time, and what he elected to say later, will be gathered from his reply: "I ever thought it a mighty oversight in Courts to let the *honnête homme*, the *homme d'esprit* and the *homme de bien* gain ground among them, because those qualities will be sure to predominate over business and greatness, as they now do with your lordship, who against all forms is pleased to remember a useless man at so great a distance, where it would be pardonable for his idlest friends, and of his own level, to forget him."

Of all Swift's unkind digs at Halifax, the least justified were the sneering lines:

> While Montagu who claimed the station
> To be Maecenas of the nation
> For poets often table kept,
> But ne'er considered where they slept:
> Himself as rich as fifty Jews,
> Was easy though they wanted shoes.

It may be true, as urged by Sir Henry Craik in his life of the Dean, that when Swift was writing to Halifax, he was labouring under a sense of strain revealed in a forced tone of complaint, but one hesitates to believe that he consistently played the part of insincere friend, or that little of the sentiment of his letter of November 13th, 1709, was really genuine. When he spoke of Halifax's extreme good usage of him, teaching him to hate Laracor where he had been banished, of his friends in Ireland sharing the same idea of Halifax's generosity, magnificence, wit, judgment and knowledge in the enjoyment of life, of his having made over his interests and fortune to the corporation of deserving men in want, of his keeping

[1] *Journal to Stella.* [2] Prose Works, X, p. 275.
[3] Letter dated October 6th, 1709.

open house with the best table in England—when he uttered all these nice things about Halifax, was he just guilty of so much blarney?

Admittedly behind the compliments there was a purpose, expressed in the postscript: "Pray desire Dr. [Robert] South to die about the fall of the leaf, for he has a prebend of Westminster which will make me your neighbour [Halifax was still living in New Palace Yard] and a sinecure [Islip, near Oxford] in the country, both in the queen's gift, which my friends have often told me will fit me extremely." Unfortunately for Swift, the outspoken divine, who had refused promotion on the ground that it had come too late, did not die until 1716, by which time Halifax had been in his grave a year. Dr. South was great enough to have been spared Swift's indecent hopes and witty enough to have earned his admiration. Preaching before Charles II. and his unseemly courtiers, he perceived that all in the royal pew were asleep. Pausing, he called out thrice to Lauderdale, who, awakening with a start, stood up. "My Lord," he remarked in the smoothest of tones, "I am sorry to interrupt your repose, but I must beg that you will not snore quite so loud, lest you should awaken His Majesty!"

As an explanation of his double-facedness, Swift, some time after Halifax's death, explained to Pope that he looked upon Ministers of State as a race of people whose acquaintance no man could court, otherwise than upon the score of vanity or ambition. Never having received more than one small favour, he was under no necessity of being a slave to men in power, but chose his friends by their personal worth.

It is easy to sneer at Halifax as "fed with dedications", but when we remember that in the last years of his life he was expected to fulfil the hopes, to mention but a few, of Congreve, Addison, Swift, Steele, Prior, and to some extent Pope, we must in all fairness say he deserved better of his critics. Whatever his motives, he never stopped giving. Pope, if Spence is to be believed, remembers seeing in Lord Halifax's handwriting a paper, dated 1709, promising a subscription of 400 guineas for the best-written comedy. From the correspondence of Vanbrugh and the 1st Duke of Manchester, it is evident that Halifax took an intelligent interest in the Opera, and supported the bringing over of the best Italian singers. In one of his own letters to Harley, we catch a glimpse of him listening to Anastasia Robinson, the singer whom later the eccentric Earl of Peterborough was to marry. And we have Colley Cibber's word for it that he was the mainspring of the movement, started in 1706, to provide funds to revive, with such famous players in the cast as Colley Cibber, Mrs. Bracegirdle, Mrs. Oldfield and Mrs. Porter, plays as interesting as Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*, Fletcher's *The King and no King*, and Dryden's *Marriage à la Mode*.

However vain Halifax may have been, he would not have put himself to so much trouble and expense if he had not been genuinely concerned for the welfare of struggling geniuses and for the prosperity of the theatre which they adorned. None was better aware than he that the dedications, at which Swift sneered, were expected to earn dividends for the writers in the shape of subscriptions or sinecures. That he never missed an opportunity of doing the deserving a good turn, so far from being an occasion for sneers,

surely redounds to his credit. What in his conduct may call for adverse criticism is a certain lack of thoughtfulness. He forgot that his invitations to Hampton Court entailed the more indigent of his guests in an expense which they could ill afford. Swift, frugal-minded, resented it as a cruel tax on his purse, and poured out his feelings in a memorable letter to Stella: "October 13th, 1710, Lord Halifax is always teasing me to go down to his country house, which will cost me a guinea to his servants and twelve shillings coach hire, and he shall be hanged first!"[1]

Swift in his *Journal to Stella* speaks of dining with Halifax at his lodgings in Hampton Court and being invited to inspect his house and park. The lodgings were situated in the topmost storey of the south side of Fountain Court, overlooking the private gardens (now comprised in Suite VI), and Halifax, who suffered severely from gout, must often have wished there had been less climbing to do. The house and park—Bushey Lodge and Bushey Park—were not his property as Swift's language might lead us to suppose, but a grant from the Crown, for which Halifax had had to pay, firstly by purchasing the rights under letters patent conferring their use upon various favourites of Charles II., and secondly by putting the Lodge, which was close to Teddington Gate on the west side of the famous Chestnut Avenue, into proper habitable order, it having been allowed by disuse and neglect to fall into a tumbledown condition.

These rights, carrying with them emoluments of between £200 and £300, had been held by Lady Castlemaine, the Duke of Northumberland and Edward Progers, caterer to Charles II.'s ribald amusements, by virtue of various picturesque offices having to do with the care and upkeep of Bushey Park and Hampton Court palace and grounds: Chief Steward of the Honour and Manor of Hampton Court, Feodary of the Honour, Lieut. and Keeper of the Chase, Keeper of Bushey Park, and of the middle, north and south Parks, Paler and Mower of the brakes of the same, Keeper of the Game in and about the Honour, Keeper of the Harewarden, etc., etc. On June 3rd, 1710, " in celebration of his good, faithful and acceptable services ", Queen Anne had been pleased to confirm Halifax in these posts, the rights to which he had purchased from the previous holders' trustees, adding only the condition that he should put the Lodge in proper repair.[2]

Halifax always liked the neighbourhood of the river, and the great farm at Apscourt, Walton-on-Thames, seems to have afforded him particular joy. In the last year of his life he completed the purchase of the Manor of Sandown (Surrey), occasionally called Burwood.

His health required that he should enjoy as much country air as possible; hence his preference for seeing his friends at Hampton Court. From hints dropped in his letters to Harley, it is clear that he was not in good physical trim, being afraid to venture out in bad weather. He complained of his leg being very painful. Foolishly he allowed disappointment over his status in the Ministry to play on his nerves, with adverse results to his health. In the last months of his life, despite Bernstorff's admonition and his own promise to be more conciliatory, he remained divided from the other Ministers. Friedrich Bonat, the Prussian Resident, speaks of him as meddling even in

[1] *Journal to Stella.* [2] *Hampton Court Palace*, by Ernest Law.

the private affairs of the king, though the allusion, which occurs in a letter written a few days after Halifax's death, is far from clear: *Aussi S. M. est consolée de la perte d'un Ministre, habile à la vérité, mais qui le contrôlait en tout, et qui l'exposait ouvertement au Parlement pour favoriser ses propres amourettes. Cette historiette est tenue fort secrète.*[1]

On May 15th, 1715, while on a visit to Mynheer Duvenvoord, the Dutch Ambassador, he was suddenly taken ill. He was found to be suffering from pneumonia and expired on the 19th. His remains were laid to rest in the Albemarle vault in Henry VII.'s Chapel in Westminster Abbey, where in due course he was joined by Addison, which event inspired Tickell to an elegy which may bear modest comparison with Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*:

> While speechless o'er the closing grave bend
> Accept these tears, thou dear departed friend,
> Oh, gone for ever; take this last adieu
> And sleep in peace, next thy loved Mountague.

. . . . . .

As a statesman, Halifax has been greatly undervalued, and it is questionable whether even now history adequately appreciates his financial reforms. By transforming the whole system of national credit and allowing England to finance the costly war with Louis XIV., he helped, as surely as Marlborough with his military genius, to save not only this country but Europe from a formidable tyranny. He was one of the greatest orators of an age rich in masters of eloquence. There were times when, in clear logic and forcible exposition, he outshone both Somers and Bolingbroke, despising the appeal to the passions which was the latter's favourite device in debate. As a public speaker, as well as a conversationalist, Halifax was in his element. To him, who plumed himself on being a considerable poet, might with good reason have been applied Rochester's criticism of Shadwell: "If he had burnt all he wrote and printed all he spoke, he would have had more wit and humour than any other poet."

Halifax, it must be admitted, was served by a tenth-rate muse, and one finds little cause to quarrel with such representative verdicts as those of Colley Cibber and Dr. Johnson. The former, quite fairly, remarks that Halifax makes a less considerable figure than the Earl of Dorset, his verse having a languor which seems to indicate that he was not born with a poetical genius. More downright and severe, Dr. Johnson dismisses the statesman in this scathing fashion: "It would now be esteemed no honour by a contributor to the monthly bundles of verses to be told that in strains, either familiar or solemn, he sings like Montague, and his appreciation of his Lordship's poetic merits will not, perhaps, be found to fall much short of general estimate."

Lord Halifax bequeathed a substantial fortune to Catharine Barton, for whom he admits he cherished a great love and affection. In the chapter which follows the undefined relationship existing between the two is discussed in the light of all the known facts.

[1] Also His Majesty was reconciled to the loss of a Minister, able, it is true, but who checked him in all things, even openly exposing him in Parliament for promoting his own love-affairs. This anecdote is kept very secret.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NEWTON'S PRETTY NIECE

THOUGH they have been dead these two hundred years and more, it cannot be said that we have moved much nearer to an exact definition of the nature of the relationship between Catharine Barton, the philosopher Newton's pretty niece, and Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax, political father of the Bank of England. We may feel we are not left groping so hopelessly in the dark as in the case of Swift and Stella; but the evidence, pointing as it does in the one direction, is still not conclusive enough to warrant a decisive pronouncement, and we must give the memory of these fond friends the full benefit of the doubt. As for the theory of a secret marriage put forward by Professor Augustus De Morgan, the eminent mathematician, who has written much on Newton's discoveries, it deserves respect only because it originates from so distinguished a source, and not because of any other merit. No trace of such a marriage has ever been discovered, nor a satisfying explanation furnished why, after the Earl's death, the union, if legalized, should not have been publicly proclaimed and the lady's name entirely cleared of damaging imputation.

The Professor's argument was that only in the honourable rôle of wife would his niece's admittedly close association with the Whig statesman have been permitted by a man of Newton's unquestionably high principles. The alternatives—an innocent or platonic friendship, or a union unsanctified by marriage, the view held by Peter Cunningham, the author and critic, [*vide* his edition of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, 1854]—he dismissed for reasons which time has made no more convincing. In the belief that he had arrived at the correct explanation of the puzzling intimacy, he submitted his MS., which appeared in *Notes and Queries* on November 5th, 1853, to Lord Macaulay, who in that part of his history dealing with William III.'s reign [unfortunately never finished], had, necessarily, to give the character and achievements of Lord Halifax extended notice. The distinguished historian's reply[1] was the reverse of flattering to the Professor's theory.

"I share your hopes," he wrote, . . . "but there are some important facts which seem to have escaped your notice. Mrs. Barton was a most intimate friend of Swift. . . . He never hints the least suspicion of her virtue. . . . He was then completely estranged from Halifax, and was the literary champion of the Tories. Yet he suffered Mrs. Barton [unmarried ladies were generally referred to in those days as 'Mrs.'] to talk Whiggism to him and seems not to have liked her the less. She evidently lived at that time, not with Halifax, but in a ladylike manner by herself, seeing the best company and giving handsome dinners. I cannot believe that Swift, who though he had no religion, had a great deal of professional spirit, would have haunted the house and sat at the table of any man's kept mistress,

[1] *Newton. His Friend and Niece*, by the late Augustus De Morgan, edited by his wife and his pupil, A. C. Ranyard, 1885.

above all the kept mistress of his enemy. But you can look at the letters to Stella and judge for yourself. Swift mentions the brother, an officer, a sad dog, who was killed in Hill's unlucky expedition to Quebec.

"You need not, I think, say much about the purity of Halifax's morals. He is accused of libertinism by Davenant and though Davenant was a malignant fellow and little to be trusted, I do not know that we have the means of refuting the accusation. I am very unwilling to believe that Mrs. Barton was Halifax's mistress, but I cannot think that she was his wife. There was no conceivable reason for his not avowing the marriage, if it had really taken place. There would have been no *mésalliance*. He was a younger son of a younger son and had been educated for the Church. Dorset's patronage and his own abilities raised him in the world, but in all the lampoons of the time Montague is spoken of as a parvenu. The sister of a Colonel in the army, the niece of a member for the university of Cambridge, was surely a match for any man. My own belief is that Mrs. Barton was neither Halifax's mistress nor his wife, and that the liaison between them was of the same sort with that between Congreve and Mrs. Bracegirdle, with that between Swift and Stella, with that between Cowper and Mrs. Unwin. But whether it was so or not, I have no doubt it was so considered by Newton, who, sagacious as he was in his own sphere, was the last man in the world to have discovered an amour if the parties took the most ordinary precautions. With all his genius, he was as simple as a child, and the coldness of his own temperament would have made him slow to believe that others had been led astray by their passions. If anything more occurs to me I will write again."

The only comment that Macaulay's sensible letter seems to call for is that Mrs. Bracegirdle was not so innocent as he appears to assume,[1] and that Swift's supposed delicacy of feeling did not prevent him from frequently dining with Lady Orkney, who had been William III.'s kept mistress, and a pretty expensive one, too, nor stop him from fraternizing with the demi-rep and professional scandalmonger, Mrs. Manley.

Three years after writing to Macaulay, the learned Professor got what he called "a clincher" about Catharine Barton and Lord Halifax[2]—a letter written by Sir Isaac Newton to Sir John Newton, a distant kinsman, four days after Halifax's death. Excusing himself for not paying him a visit, Newton wrote: "The concern I am in for the loss of my Lord Halifax, and the *circumstances in which I stand related to his family*, will not suffer me to go abroad till his funeral is over." The italicised phrase seemed to De Morgan almost conclusive proof of a second marriage, for in no other way could Newton be related to the Montagues. That Newton's meaning might simply be acknowledgment of the debt—his promotion to the Mint, for instance—which he owed to Halifax, did not occur to the enthusiastic and excited Professor, or if it did was summarily rejected by him. Heartened by his discovery he communicated with such of his friends as, on the evidence previously submitted, had declined to go as far as he did with the marriage theory. To Sir John Herschel he wrote on August 15th, 1856,

[1] *Congreve the Man*, by John Hodges, 1941; Swift's letters to Charles Ford.
[2] *Memoirs of Augustus De Morgan*, by his wife, 1882.

reporting mixed progress in convincing the doubters: "Macaulay, who used to battle the point, and fought for the Platonics, now says he does not *entirely reject* my hypothesis. [Sir David] Brewster has never written me since I reviewed his book [*Memoirs of Sir Isaac Newton*, 2 vols, 1855], so I cannot send it [Newton's letter to Sir John Newton] to him. Lord Brougham was brought up by it; says it is very curious and he must think about it. I believe this letter will be Cath. Barton's marriage certificate."

That Brewster should be annoyed with De Morgan was understandable. In his opinion he had thoroughly demolished all the Professor's marriage arguments, but the determined mathematician, never to be diverted from a course which he held to be right, defiantly continued to proclaim that truth rested with him. In the first edition of his great book, Sir David had incautiously remarked that Halifax was attached to Miss Barton, but that the causes which prevented their union were unknown. In the second edition published in 1855, he withdrew this remark and was altogether more guarded in his references to the subject. Denying that Halifax was a libertine, he declared that the Earl's affection for Miss Barton and his delight in her society never once excited the criticism of his contemporaries [?]; further, that there was not the slightest reason to believe that it exceeded that love and admiration which married men, and men of all ages, ever feel in the presence of physical and intellectual beauty. Brewster and Macaulay, it will be seen, shared the same view of the connection: innocent friendship.

In support of the position he had taken up, De Morgan wrote an article for the *Companion to the Almanac* for 1858, embodying all the facts and arguments, but the estimable publisher, Charles Knight, whose laudable object in life was the diffusion of useful [and presumably non-controversial] knowledge, shied at it as not being a subject of general interest, though in our less prudish times one cannot imagine a publisher of distinction refusing a contribution of such powerful appeal from so highly respected a scientist and man of letters. By way of compromise he invited De Morgan to alter or curtail his contribution, or furnish another article, but the mathematician indignantly declined to do either, and brought his association with the publication to an end.

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In the formation of their respective beliefs all contributors to the controversy so far mentioned were much less fortunate than the present writer, inasmuch as certain material evidence, admittedly more suggestive than conclusive, only became available long after they were in their graves. With every known fact assembled, the issue is narrowed down to the alternatives of platonic friendship and the relationship of man and mistress. The marriage theory need not detain us for more than a few seconds. So far from the Registers producing any confirmatory testimony of a marriage, they have done the exact opposite. In giving notice to the Faculty Office of her intended marriage to John C. Conduitt [destined to be Newton's successor at the Mint], on August 26th, 1717, Catharine Barton swore on oath that her condition was that of spinster, and at the actual wedding, which took place at Russell Court Chapel, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, she

was so described. Had she been Lady Halifax, one feels she would only have been too pleased to have claimed this dignity when marrying, nor is it possible to discover what objection her husband could have had to such a course.

She was not Lady Halifax, because in any second venture into matrimony, as we hope to prove conclusively, the money-loving Earl, dominated by his ambitions rather than by his heart, was resolved to secure a nobly-born heiress, or a rich nobleman's widow, and in turn paid his attentions to Lord Carbery's daughter and Lady Burlington, though with no luck in either case. He liked Catharine Barton very much, but not to the extent of contracting with her what would have been a penniless marriage. In wanting a rich bride he was a typically-behaved parvenu, whose avarice had unquestionably been aroused by the example of his businesslike cousin, Ralph Montagu, a pillar of the Whig party, in marrying two of the greatest fortunes in England. To say that it had never been the Montagu way to wed solely for love would be to libel the family, but cases of dowerless brides were few and far between.

Halifax, faithful to the spirit of Swift's age, distrusted sentiment and disdained romance. The nearest approach to tenderness he permitted himself was the fashioning of two commendatory epigrams in honour of Catharine and certain eulogistic references to her in his will, which latter involved him in no risk, seeing they were only to be published after his death. The verses are to be found in a poem called *The Toasters*, where all the distinguished beauties of the day are celebrated in distinct epigrams, originally engraved on the drinking glasses of the Kit-Kat Club, each member of which was required to toast in melodious metre the lady of his choice:

> Stampt with her reigning charms this brittle glass
> Will safely through the realms of Bacchus pass ;
> Full fraught with beauty will new flames impart,
> And mount her shining image in the heart.
>
> Beauty and wit strive each in vain,
> To banish Bacchus and his train ;
> But Barton with successful charms
> From both their quivers drew her arms.
> The roving god his sway resigns
> And cheerfully submits his vines.

The artificial elegance of the verse, it will be noted, scarcely conceals the lack of any deep or moving sentiment. But to return to the evidence. In 1928, or many years after Macaulay, Brewster, De Morgan and Cunningham had passed to their well-earned rest, there were published *The Diaries of Sylvester Douglas*, excellently edited by Francis Bickley.[1] The diarist, better known as Lord Glenbervie, was the son-in-law of the much reviled Lord North, the statesman who is supposed to have lost us the American Colonies. Among the confidences revealed by Glenbervie are statements concerning Lord Halifax and Catharine Barton made by George James [Gilly] Williams [brother-in-law of Lord North], and celebrated as the crony

[1] Another section of the Diaries had been published in 1910 by Walter Sichel.

of George Selwyn the wit, and Horace Walpole. The effect of these statements is to provide support of a kind for the view widely publicized by Mrs. Manley in 1710, that Catharine Barton was Halifax's mistress.

Glenbervie, a lawyer by profession, should have been able to distinguish between truth and lying gossip, but here he intrudes no opinion of his own, merely passes on what was told him. Williams begins by narrating the story, more or less as told by Spence in his Anecdotes, of Halifax suggesting emendations to Pope's translation of the *Iliad*. The Diary then goes on: " Lord Halifax was the great patron of Sir Isaac Newton. Mr. Williams says that Voltaire or some other French author mentions that the offices which had been bestowed on that great man were in consequence of the respect paid to genius in this country, but that he had found Sir Isaac's niece was Lord Halifax's mistress, and Mr. Williams says the fact was so. Sir Isaac had a niece unmarried, of the name of Mrs. Barton, a goodlooking person of talents and reading. Sir Isaac lived with her in Lisle Street, Leicester Fields, and at her house there used to be a meeting in the evenings of men of learning and science. But it was a fixed rule that the meeting broke up at nine at night, and at that hour exactly Lord Halifax's chariot used to stop at the door. Old Mr. Mildmay, who had been secretary to Lord Bolingbroke and was a friend and neighbour of Lady Drake's in the country, used to be of the meetings, and told Mr. Williams that he has a hundred times met Lord Halifax's carriage in the street, or himself on the staircase, as he was going away. Mrs. Barton, after her uncle's death, married Mr. Conduit[t], his successor as Master of the Mint, and Mr. Williams knew her well. She used to visit Lady Drake, was a clever talking woman, a sort of leading character among the Tories ".

This conversation between Glenbervie and Williams took place on January 20th, 1802. Williams was then 86; hence allowance must be made for his memory not being so good or accurate as it had been. Halifax had been dead 77 years, and as Mildmay was probably 30 at least at the time of the statesman's death, the confidences which Williams repeated as faithfully as his memory served him must have been imparted nearly forty years previously. The one striking point which was not likely to have faded from, or become blurred in, Williams' mind is the particular hour, 9 p.m., at which the gatherings at Newton's house broke up, and Lord Halifax's carriage appeared at the door. We see no reason for challenging this statement either as an invention or the product of a faulty memory. It is just what we suppose did happen, since in no quarter is it questioned that the pair lived in a state of the closest intimacy. After what Lord Halifax wrote in his will, any attempt to minimize the strength of the association would be absurd.

When a man speaks, as Halifax does, of the sincere love, affection and esteem he has had for a particular lady's person, and of the pleasure and happiness he has had in her conversation, we are bound to assume that they lived much in each other's company. Free of disabling ties, the one a widower, the other a spinster of sensible age, they felt at liberty to meet whenever occasion offered. That they would altogether escape ill-natured gossip was, having regard to the nature of the times, too much for them to hope for, and it is a fair inference that while doing nothing wilfully to promote tittle-

tattle, they were not to be deterred from meeting by fear of scandalous gossip.

We should expect them to meet from time to time under Halifax's roof. The absence of any reference to her presence by the visitors to his London house or his Hampton Court abode signifies little. If Lord Halifax had wished to entertain his charming friend, what more likely than that he would chose for the meeting-place his private retreat, the farmstead at Apscourt, gay with floral parterres, over which, as was shown in the previous chapter, he had taken such trouble? The fact that he was to bequeath her the manor in his will rather bears out the idea that it was linked to both by the happiest of memories. In St. Martin's Street their meetings were largely protected from scandal by taking place in the uncle's house, and in view of his great friendship with the statesman, it is difficult to believe that Newton would not, for some part of the evening, have joined in the conversation. Again, Swift, a bachelor of 43, was in the habit of calling, dining and spending several hours alone with Miss Barton, a maiden lady of 31. On several occasions he must have stayed long past 9 p.m.; yet no scandal attached to those visits, and no one ventured to suggest there was anything amiss in their relations.

. . . . . .

No useful service is performed by pretending that Catharine Barton was a plaster saint, a fault which Sir David Brewster, more the interested advocate than the impartial judge when he comes to discuss her relations with Halifax, never quite succeeded in overcoming. She was an outspoken, highly sophisticated young woman who was more than a match in wit and repartee for the brilliant, worldly company in which she mixed, her women friends usually being the gay and lively beauties whose charms the members of the Kit-Kat Club were in the habit of toasting.

When she dined at Lady Worsley's[1] or Lady Betty Germaine's,[2] she met for the most part pleasure-loving specimens of the aristocracy, whose morals, proclaimed as the standard of good-breeding, set the tone of the most popular stage representations, successful in proportion as they mirrored the lives of the fast set. "Cuckoldism," declared Addison, "is the basis of most of the modern plays." The worldly education of Catharine, who naturally could not breathe for long in the rarefied atmosphere in which Newton, a superlative genius, chose to dwell, had progressed to such a degree that she was not above discussing with Swift matters of gynæcological interest [*vide Journal to Stella*, September 28th, 1710], nor of exchanging with him *risqué* stories, of which the following is an example:

> "An old gentlewoman died here [London] two months ago and left in her will to have eight men and eight maids bearers, who should have two guineas apiece; ten guineas to the parson for a sermon, and two

[1] Lady Worsley was the wife of Sir Robert Worsley, Bt., daughter of Viscount Weymouth, and mother of Lady Carteret.

[2] Lady Betty Germaine was the daughter of the 2nd Earl of Berkeley and wife of the Dutch gambler and rake, Sir John Germaine [*vide The Berkeleys of Berkeley Square*, by Bernard Falk].

guineas to the clerk. But bearers, parson and clerk must all be true virgins; and not to be admitted till they took their oaths of virginity. So the poor woman lies still unburied, and so must do till the general resurrection."

That Miss Barton was a close friend of Lady Betty Germaine may be evidence that she moved in the best aristocratic circles, but it is scarcely evidence as to character, as urged by Professor De Morgan, for, deservedly or otherwise, the relations of the Earl of Berkeley's delightful daughter with Lionel Sackville, 1st Duke of Dorset, did not escape contemporary censure.

While the 9 p.m. calls mentioned by Mildmay to Williams do not necessarily stamp Halifax as Miss Barton's lover, yet, taken in conjunction with the fortune left her in the Earl's will, where he freely testifies to his love and admiration, with her strange reluctance to marry until after his death, with the absence of any reply to the charge that she was his mistress, they do seem to point to an exclusive relationship. The alternative theory of innocent friendship may still be undisposed of, but in comparison it scarcely looks so convincing.

Williams's statement would be more persuasive if freer from palpable inaccuracy, due, it is certain, more to faulty memory than to deliberate misrepresentation; but when all is said and done the inaccuracies are irrelevant to the issue. It is what remains that is important—the story of Halifax's 9 p.m. calls. Most outstanding of the inaccuracies is the reference to Voltaire. Neither that cynical philosopher nor any other French author went so far as to say that Mrs. Conduitt was Halifax's mistress. Voltaire, whom Williams has obviously in mind, merely implied that because of his liking for the very pretty niece, Halifax had been induced to promote Sir Isaac Newton. In this assumption Voltaire had fallen into grievous error. Halifax did not meet the niece until 1701 or thereabouts, at which period Newton had already been four years at the Mint. In any case, because of his 'Varsity association with the philosopher and the latter's incomparable attainments, he felt himself under a supreme moral obligation to help Newton at the first opportunity. " I will not suffer the lamp which gives so much light to want oil," he declared. The great men of the day, Halifax excepted, were too busy to bother about a mathematician whose work they did not understand. In testimony of his admiration and respect for Newton, he had striven to learn mathematics in order to understand properly the philosopher's *Principia*, and if he had failed it was not for want of trying.

In appointing Newton to the Mint he chose the man he considered best fitted for the position, and at the same time found jobs for Halley and Locke, whose advice about the recoinage he had also taken, the one in the Chester Mint and the other in the Council of Trade.

Catharine must have been very pretty, for even at the mature age of 48 she charmed Voltaire, who had a keen eye for feminine beauty. Soon after his arrival in England in 1727, he called on her with the view to gleaning anecdotes of her illustrious uncle, whom he considered the greatest Englishman. He had hoped to meet Newton, but death had intervened, and all he was permitted was a glimpse of the coffin being borne that sad March

day in 1727 to its last resting-place in Westminster Abbey. When he came to write his Dictionary of Philosophy he made the following reference to the charming niece (Vol. IV, p. 61):

> J'avais cru dans ma jeunesse que Newton avait fait sa fortune par son extrême mérite. Je m'étais imaginé que la cour et la ville de Londres l'avait nommé par acclamation grand maître des monnaies du royaume. Point du tout. Isaac Newton avait une nièce assez aimable nommée Madame Conduitt; elle plût beaucoup au grand Trésorier Halifax. Le calcul infinitésimal et la gravitation ne lui auraient servi de rien sans une jolie nièce.[1]

In the fifteenth of the *Lettres sur les Anglais* published in 1733, Voltaire tells the famous story of the falling apple which led Newton to speculate on the force of gravity, and in his *Eléments de la Philosophie de Newton*, part III, chapter III, names Mrs. Conduitt as his authority for the anecdote which he was the first to give to the world: "Un jour en l'année, 1666, Newton retira à la campagne, et voyant tomber des fruits d'un arbre, à ce que m'a conté sa nièce Madame Conduit[t] se laisser aller, etc."[2]

Williams says that Newton lived in Lisle Street, Leicester Fields. The locality is right, but not the street. It was St. Martin's Street, the house, a large plain brick residence, being situated next to Orange Street Chapel, formerly inhabited by the Danish Envoy, and during the philosopher's tenure easily distinguishable by reason of the small observatory which he had built at the top. Again, Mrs. Barton married Conduitt in her uncle's lifetime, ten years, indeed, before his death. Finally, it is hardly likely that so confirmed a Whig as she was when Halifax and Newton were alive, would suddenly turn Tory. But these mistakes, we repeat, are of trivial importance. All that is of value in Williams's story is the revelation of Halifax's 9 p.m. calls, a statement which bears the complexion of truth.

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Who was Catharine Barton and what was her history? Born in November, 1679, and therefore eighteen years younger than her noble admirer, she was the second daughter of Robert Barton, a clergyman of Brigstock, Northamptonshire, and his second wife, Hannah Smith, Newton's half-sister. The Bartons were of honourable descent, being nearly related to the Earl of Rockingham and other distinguished families belonging to the county, in which for several hundred years they had owned estates. Unconscious of laying herself open to the retort that history repeats itself, Catharine claimed to be descended from Catharine Swinford, wife of Sir Hugh Swinford, who became the mistress of John of Gaunt, which is going back a great while. It is necessary to stress the honourable pedigree of the Bartons, if only to refute the theory that Halifax did not marry Catharine because she was not

[1] In my youth I had always believed that supreme merit had brought Newton fortune. I had imagined that the Court and the City of London had by acclamation nominated him head of the State Mint. Not at all. Isaac Newton had a very charming niece, Mrs. Conduitt, who made a conquest of the First Lord of the Treasury, Halifax. The infinitesimal [differential] calculus and [the law of] gravitation would have availed him naught without a pretty niece [*Voltaire*, by Georg Brandes].

[2] *Voltaire, Montesquieu and Rousseau in England*, by J. Churton Collins.

sufficiently well-born to mate with the Montagues. But the family, if of good lineage, were of small fortune, and for her education Catharine was partially or wholly dependent upon her uncle's generosity.

The first undisputed fact in connection with Miss Barton is that in August, 1700, she was lodging at Pudlicot, near Woodstock, Oxfordshire. From a letter sent to Catharine by her "very loving uncle", Sir Isaac Newton, it seems that she was recovering from an attack of smallpox, and that Lady Norris was expecting to hear from her. This dame was a much-marrying sort. Having previously been thrice wed, she had taken as her fourth husband, rich Sir William Norris, Ambassador to the Great Mogul, but in two years' time was to be in a position to entertain the idea of a fifth husband. When she had worn her becoming widow's weeds about a year or more, great was her surprise to receive an offer of marriage from Newton, then 60, couched in obscure terms which seemingly hid his shyness: "Your Ladyship," said he, adopting the style of a third party, "will be better able to live according to your quality by the assistance of a husband than upon your own estate alone, and, therefore, since your ladyship likes the person proposed, I doubt not but in a little time to have notice of your ladyship's inclinations to marry; at least that you will give him leave to discourse with you about it."[1]

As Lady Norris and Catharine Barton were obviously friends of some standing, it is reasonable to assume that they had met on the occasion of one of the niece's visits to her uncle in London. The exact date when Miss Barton took up residence with the lonely philosopher can only be a matter of guesswork, but it would appear to be directly after her convalescence. Newton was then occupying a house in Jermyn Street, Haymarket [now Jules' Hotel], earning as Master of the Mint £1,500 a year. The need in which he stood of someone to look after his domestic affairs was plainly revealed by his desire, at the advanced age of 60, to acquire a wife. That he made his approach to Lady Norris *after* being joined by his niece can only be explained by the disparity in their ages and temperaments, which must, at first, have made too constant and close an association a trial to both. Not until each kept to his or her own distinct circle of friends did uncle and niece apparently overcome the difficulty of living under the same roof. He had the grave and learned to keep him company, and she the witty, lively and gay, notably Halifax and Swift.

When the Whig statesman first came into her life he was already a widower, the Countess of Manchester, the aged relative [mother of nine children] whom he had married for her money, having died in 1698. In 1700, the probable date of his introduction to Catharine, he was in his fortieth year, starved of love and romance, and, being wealthy and influential, seemingly ripe, if not for a more suitable marriage, then for sentimental adventure. He had as his abode a house in New Palace Yard, close to the offices of the Auditor of the Exchequer, his official position, having lately removed from 21, St. James's Square,[2] where he had lived for three years.

According to the eulogistic life of Halifax written by a respectable hack

[1] Conduitt MSS.—Brewster's *Life of Newton*, Vol.II, p. 276, footnote.
[2] *St. James's Square*, by Arthur Dasent.

named William Pittis, and published by the notorious Curll in 1715, immediately following the statesman's death, "the Earl had resolved not to marry again, and cast his eye upon the widow of one Colonel Barton,[1] and niece of the famous Sir Isaac Newton, to be superintendent of his domestic affairs. But as this lady was young, beautiful and gay, so those that were given to censure passed a judgment upon her which she no ways merited, since she was a woman of strict honour and merit, and though she might be agreeable to his lordship in every particular, that noble peer's complaisance to her proceeded wholly from the great esteem he had for her wit and most exquisite understanding."

Professor De Morgan was so far impressed by this statement as to accept as an established fact Miss Barton's entry into Halifax's house in the rôle of glorified housekeeper, whereas there are not the slightest grounds for believing that, even if such a step were contemplated by the normally cautious and discreet Earl, it was ever carried into effect, and for the very good reason that nothing was more likely to create scandal.

On December 8th, 1699, or probably a few months before Halifax met Newton's attractive niece, the Earl of Manchester, then Ambassador in Paris, wrote his stepfather [Halifax] this significant note: "I am told that since the Duke of Shrewsbury's health will not permit him to marry, Lord Carbery [a prominent member of the Kit-Kat Club], has thoughts of you [for his daughter and heiress]. I shall be glad to hear it is so, or of anybody else that may be for your advantage." That hardly sounds as if Halifax had registered a vow of perpetual widowerhood. An editorial note attached to an entry in the *Verney Letters*, dated August 31st, 1699, gives a rather different and more truthful reason for Shrewsbury crying off the marriage: miserly Lord Carbery's refusal to give his daughter a proper dowry.

Contemporary records paint the Earl's character in lurid colours. Appointed Governor of Jamaica in 1674, he set about filling his pockets with the speed and the acquisitive thoroughness characteristic of a courtier of Charles II.'s day. He is said to have sold his Welsh servants as slaves, and not to have excluded from the transaction even his chaplain, who was passed on to a blacksmith.[2] According to Pepys, he was "one of the lewdest fellows of the Age, worse even than Sir Charles Sedley".

But his enormous wealth not only induced his fellow-peers to condone his monstrous faults, but to compete, on behalf of their sons of marriageable age, for the hand of his daughter, the Lady Anne Vaughan, brought up under the supervision of a most devout governess-companion, with as little intercourse as possible with the sinful outer world. When, however, the realistic-minded noblemen came to discuss marriage finance with Lord Carbery, they discovered that he was not prepared to settle any appreciable amount on her in his lifetime. They must wait until his death, when all his wealth would be hers. As there was no telling when the skinflint of an Earl would die, the prospective fathers-in-law lost their appetite for the contemplated alliance, and the pious Lady Anne continued in her unsullied maiden state.

[1] The writer is quite mistaken in believing the lady to be a widow. She was the sister of Lieut.-Col. Barton, who was killed in 1711.

[2] Hist. MSS. Commission, 7th report.

The only glimpse would-be suitors caught of her was when she accompanied her father on a drive in his mean two-horse carriage, or when at Carbery House, Paradise Row, Chelsea, closely guarded by the argus-eyed duenna, she came down to dinner. However, no sooner was the breath out of her father's body than, dropping her nun-like manner, she launched out into a carriage and six, much to the amazement of the fashionable world.

Apparently Halifax fared no better with the ruffian of a father than Shrewsbury had done, and when next we hear of him [*Wentworth Papers*], he was paying court to that rich widow, Juliana, Countess of Burlington, whose husband, Charles, 2nd Earl, owner of a vast London estate, had died in 1704. This lady was in every way a desirable match, being in her early thirties [she was born in 1672], Mistress of the Robes to Queen Anne, and, according to all accounts, the finest type of gentlewoman. Probably because she sided with her royal mistress, who hated Halifax as one of the Whig Junto, she refused to smile upon his suit.

While pursuing his matrimonial ambitions, the statesman had been seeing a great deal of Newton's niece, who, besides being witty and beautiful, had a pert manner which many men appeared to find most attractive. That she did not marry, though numbering her admirers by the score, undoubtedly set many tongues wagging, and the natural inference is that she had hopes, one day, of becoming Lady Halifax. If she was charming enough to inspire his Kit-Kat verses, she was good enough to be his wife —some such reasoning must have shaped her thoughts. How this calculating admirer managed to reconcile his pressing attentions to Newton's niece with his simultaneous search for a rich and nobly-born bride is no small part of the mystery of the relationship. Can it be that she, normally cool and self-possessed, ever mistress of herself, was so drawn to Halifax as to be prepared to continue the association on his own terms? It is said that there is no knowing what a woman in love will do. The alternative supposition that she was not opposed to his marrying another woman is too preposterous to warrant consideration. Whatever the truth, Halifax allowed the name of his charming young friend to be bandied about in not very flattering club-room talk, which was neither kind nor chivalrous of him.

If there were times when his conscience painfully smote him, one such occasion must have been on April 12th, 1706, when to his will, made two days previously, he added a codicil in Catharine's favour. Events, to some extent, had forced his hand. He expected to be away from England for several months, having been appointed special envoy to the Electoral Court and one of the negotiators over the Dutch Barrier. To make his will seemed a prudent precaution. That he should elect to provide for Miss Barton by way of a codicil, an afterthought it might seem, instead of in the body of the will, was to ensure secrecy. Jacob Tonson, the garrulous secretary of the Kit-Kat Club, had been one of the three witnesses to the first document, which, as it contained no surprises, was unlikely to encourage him to talk. Halifax's signature to the second document, with its romantic flavouring, was attested by entirely fresh witnesses. Catharine was left all his jewels and £3,000 " as a small token of the great love and affection I have long had for her". How long? The indications are, since the autumn

of 1700, or the start of 1701, when in our opinion Catharine Barton, newly-recovered from her illness, first became housekeeper to her uncle in Jermyn Street.

On the peer's homecoming there was a further development in the way of provision for Miss Barton. On October 26th of that same year a trust came into being, under which she was to have the benefit of a life annuity of £200, purchased for her in the name of Sir Isaac Newton, with Halifax, nineteen years his junior, as trustee.[1] Catharine Barton being then only 27, the annuity must have cost between £2,000 and £3,000. It is argued that Newton could not have saved this amount out of his limited earnings, wherefore the money must have been found by Halifax. But for seven years Newton had been in receipt of a salary of £1,500, and as his expenditure was only modest, it should not have been beyond his capacity to have saved £2,000 over the whole period.

Were the provisions in the codicil and the Trust Fund Halifax's way of saying " good-bye " to Catharine? One is bound to ask the question, because within a short period of these documents being executed, he seems to have renewed the pursuit of Lady Anne Vaughan, as the rival, consciously or otherwise, of his friend Anthony, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, gifted author of *The Characteristics*, to whom, being more or less an invalid, the lady's sedate upbringing specially recommended her. He, the studious man of letters, with no love for gadding about, wanted as wife not a spoilt society favourite, but a quiet, homely creature who would consult his interests and comfort; for which reason he was prepared to take the lady of his choice with the smallest of dowries. He was loth to be thought in competition with Halifax, whom he greatly valued as a friend and[2] much admired as a patron of indigent genius, as witness his letter of December, 1708, imploring aid from the Earl for the Huguenot, Pierre Des Maizeaux, best known as the friend and biographer of Saint Evremond: " He is one of the starving race of scholars. There are so few left, and these so low-spirited and out of hope that they can hardly prove troublesome or importunate. Perhaps there might have been none of this sort left among us, had not your lordship, even in your private character, been a patron to them when they had none left in the public."

Shaftesbury's fears of being cut out in his courtship by Halifax inspired this plaintive note to his friend Robert [subsequently Viscount] Molesworth: " October 23rd, 1708. If the person talked of [Halifax] be really my rival

[1] On August 1st, 1939, there was sold at Sotheby's an autograph MS. consisting of drafts of deeds relating to Catharine Barton and Lord Halifax.

[2] Addison, in *The Spectator*, No. 533, Tuesday, November 11th, 1712, connects the pair in a quaint anecdote. Locke, the philosopher, had been invited to join Halifax, Anglesey and Shaftesbury at dinner. He expected some entertaining conversation after the meal but, much to his disgust, the trio took to cards ; whereupon he withdrew to the window and began to write. On being asked why he did this, he replied, " My Lord, I could not sleep last night for the pleasure and improvement I expected from the conversation of the greatest men of the Age." Realizing how much they were to blame, they agreed to throw their cards into the fire if Locke would follow suit with his writing. As a result, there began an exchange of views which made Locke think his evening, after all, had not been wasted. Lord Anglesey, to whom Addison refers, was presumably the Earl who married Catharine Darnley, the illegitimate daughter of James II. by the Countess of Dorchester, and from whom, on account of his cruelty, she was subsequently separated.

and in favour with the father [Lord Carbery], I must own my case is next to desperate, not only because I truly think him, as the world goes, likely enough to make a good [at least a civil] husband, but because, as my aim is not fortune, as is his, he being an old friend, too, I should unwillingly stand between him and an estate which his liberality has hitherto hindered him from gaining, as great as his advantages have been in the government. By what I have said, I believe you may guess who my supposed rival is, or if you want a further hint, 'tis one of the Chiefs of the Junto, an old friend of yours and mine; whom we long sat with in the House of Commons (not often voted with), but who was afterwards taken up to a Higher House, and is as much noted for wit and gallantry and magnificence, as for his eloquence and Courtier's character. . . . Pray keep this secret, for I got it by chance, and if there be anything in it, 'tis a great secret between the two lords themselves. But sometimes I fancy it is a nail which will hardly go [through], though I am pretty certain it has been aimed at by this old acquaintance of ours ever since a disappointment happened from a great lord beyond sea [Shrewsbury], who was to have had the lady."

Reluctantly coming to the conclusion that his chances of winning Lady Anne Vaughan in the lifetime of the father were nil, Shaftesbury decided to waste no further time in her pursuit, and in 1709 became the husband of the estimable Jane Ewer, a kinswoman. A son, the future 4th Earl, was born of the marriage, to whom Halifax became godfather. He appears to have rather neglected his godson, for, writing from Naples, on December 8th, 1711, Shaftesbury, with ill-concealed annoyance, asked Thomas Micklethwayt, a young man whom he had befriended, "Has not Lord H——x been yet to see his godson? Has he despised the charges committed to him? Or does he count it no public one, but merely private and selfish? Little has he to do to praise Car——cks (*The Characteristics*) or any work of that author, if he has no honester or more generous thoughts of his principle and sense."[1] Halifax must quickly have made amends, for in March of the following year Shaftesbury felt justified in seeking a favour from him.

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What the noble Earl, striving to repair his health in the balmy air of Italy, made no allowances for, was the strain now being put upon Halifax, not only by his political disappointments, but by a series of defamatory statements, the worst of which emanated from Mrs. Manley, one of Swift's "under-spur-leathers"—to use his own phrase—who in 1711 succeeded him in the editorship of the Tory *Examiner*.[2] Two years earlier she had begun publishing a series of volumes, four in all, entitled *New Atalantis*[3] in which prominent Whigs, and, indeed, all the political characters of the day, were

[1] *Life of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury*, by Benjamin Rand, Harvard, 1900.

[2] Founded by Harley, the Tory *Examiner* appeared in August, 1710. Swift began to write in it in October, and continued until June, 1711, when Mrs. Manley, who had not a tithe of his genius, took over the editorship. The Whig *Examiner*, edited by Arthur Maynwaring and produced by Addison, had been functioning since September, 1710.

[3] Full title reads, "Secret memoirs and manners of several persons of quality from the *New Atalantis*, an island in the Mediterranean."

mercilessly slandered. Though fictitious names were used, little ingenuity was required to identify the victims of the scurrilous attacks, usually represented as sexual debauchees or rogues, and frequently both.

Had Mrs. Manley confined herself purely to the fancies suggested by a lewd and fertile imagination, that is, relied entirely on her inventive powers, as when in danger of being sent to prison she claimed to have done, she would have been far less capable of mischief. People would have laughed and quickly forgotten what they had laughed at. But she mixed fact and fiction in such a manner that the reader never knew where the one ended and the other began. Embedded in a mass of invented matter were a number of easily recognisable truths which, being identified by the public, tempted them to believe that all she printed had some basis in fact. Beyond doubt, her remarks about Lord Halifax [Lord Julius Sergius] and Catharine Barton [Bartica] were accepted by a great many people as being in the main true.

It was in the third volume, published late in 1710, that the two were pilloried, Lord Halifax being introduced as too slow-witted, on the occasion of a visit paid to the Palace apartments of a great Whig lady, to take advantage of an unrivalled opportunity for a display of gallantry, which remissness not only lost him her goodwill, but also the vast influence she commanded. His supposed relations with Miss Barton were pictured with a wealth of detail presupposing great familiarity with both. If not true as to particulars, it seemed to read true as to character, the reputed temperamental idiosyncrasies of each being artfully brushed in as by a dashing portrait-painter who knew his sitters intimately.

Lord Julius Sergius is asked, " What is become of the charming Bartica? Can she live a day, an hour, without you? " He answers, " She is a traitress, an inconstant proud baggage; yet I love her dearly and have lavished myriads upon her, besides getting her worthy, ancient parent [Newton] a good post for connivance. But would you think it? She has other things in her head, and is grown so fantastic and high, she wants me to marry her, or else I shall have no more of her, truly: 'Twas ever a proud slut when she pretended most kindness, when she was all over coquet, and coveted to engage me more and more. When our intimacy was at the height, she us'd to make my servants wait three hours for an answer to a How-d'-ye, or a letter which I sent every successive morn. . . ."

After remarking that if he pin'd himself to death, he would not marry her while she was so saucy, Lord Julius Sergius continues, " I don't brag, but methinks I have some qualifications, besides my wealth, and being of consular dignity that deserves as good a wife; my person is not contemptible, and as to my wit and sense, look into the writings of all those moderns who durst deliver their opinion, who durst presume to dedicate to me; see there what future Ages will think of me.[1] Time was a man thought his fortune made if he could but invoke Julius Sergius; and as to State affairs, I'll say no more, let things speak for themselves; everybody knows how matters were reduced when I took them in hand. . . . 'Tis true I found my Account prodigiously in what I did and have got a good post for life.

[1] In later editions, such as the seventh, from which these extracts are taken, a key to the characters was inserted.

[Auditorship of the Exchequer.] What of that? . . . Few governments are as grateful as they should be."

Realising that Mrs. Manley must have got her information from somebody well acquainted with the frailties of those high in society, Lord Sunderland, in his capacity as Secretary of State, tried to cajole her into revealing who the person was, only to be met with the artful explanation that allusions which hit the mark were purely accidental or unconscious inspiration, the whole work being fiction and applicable to no living person. The Queen's Bench judges, before whom she was haled, did no better with her, and at the end of a long and futile cross-examination were glad to let her go free. That meant she was at liberty to produce edition after edition as required.

When these offensive allusions to Lord Halifax and Miss Barton appeared, Swift was still the friend of both. In fact, as late as November 28th, 1710, he dined with the statesman, staying until 6 p.m. and crossing him in all his Whig talk.[1] Even after he had linked up with the Tories, he maintained a semblance of friendliness towards Halifax, talking to him when they met at Court.[2] His attitude to the statesman had no bearing on his relations with Catharine Barton, who continued to be one of his favourites. That he should not protest against Mrs. Manley's slanders and get her to erase them from further editions, is something quite beyond our understanding. Mrs. Manley was too dependent on him to turn down any reasonable request, and since the objectionable references continued to appear, the inference is that he did not move a finger in the matter, perhaps arguing that the mischief was beyond repair. It is possible that he was restrained by Miss Barton, unwilling to give her detractors the satisfaction of thinking that they had upset her. However, by showing himself freely in her company, he did as much as anything to discredit the slanders, his example being promptly followed by Lady Betty Germaine and Lady Worsley.

Swift, a great man for talking, must have been hard pressed to resist some allusion to the degrading chit-chat, but the only two remarks capable of being construed as bearing on Catharine's character are contained in the *Journal to Stella*:

> November 30th, 1710.—"I will break your head in good earnest, young woman, for your nasty jest about Mrs. Barton." [Mrs. Manley's third volume, with its slanderous references to Catharine, had just appeared.]
>
> April 3rd, 1711.—"I was this morning to see Mrs. Barton; I love her better than anybody here, and see her seldomer. Why, really now, so it often happens in the world, that where one loves a body best—pshah, pshah, you are so silly with your moral observations."

What had Stella been saying about Miss Barton to extort this reproof from Swift ?

That Swift never mentions Halifax and Catharine Barton together can hardly have been intentional suppression on his part, and we can only conclude that he never saw them together, a sign that Miss Barton was as

[1] *Journal to Stella.* [2] *Idem*, October 7th, 1711.

discreet as she was clever. That she could be elusive when it pleased her, Swift, as we have just shown, was to find out for himself. The last time, apparently, he was destined to be her guest was on November 11th, 1711, when he declares he was so teased with Whiggish discourse by Mrs. Barton and Lady Betty Germaine that he never saw the like. For once in a way the mischievous fellow was having his own leg pulled. He was then Catharine's near neighbour, having the second week in October [1711] moved from Bury Street to Leicester Fields [now Leicester Square]; she, presumably, was living with her uncle at the famous house in St. Martin's Street, whither he had removed from Chelsea in 1710.

Sir David Brewster explains the Dean's allusion to dining alone with Miss Barton at her lodgings [September 28th, 1710], by saying that she must have gone into apartments while the new house was being prepared for Sir Isaac. This is rather borne out by a remark of Swift's that same month [September 13th]. "I hear very unfortunate news of Mrs. Long [a famous Kit-Kat Club toast]. She and her comrade have broke up house, and she is broke for good and all and is gone to the country." The comrade was Miss Barton, and the inference is that the two charming women had been keeping house together.

If Catharine no longer felt the need for her own separate establishment, it was because, to all intents and purposes, she enjoyed the maximum of privacy at her accommodating uncle's house. Newton seems to have left her entirely to her own devices. Never once on the occasion of his visits to Miss Barton does Swift mention meeting the philosopher. His lack of curiosity in regard to the greatest living Englishman is all the more remarkable, remembering how much he was taken up with the philosopher, George Berkeley, whom he presented to his Berkeley kinsman, the courtly Lord Berkeley of Stratton. Miss Barton, it seemed, had the key to her uncle's purse, for every now and again she provided elegant meals for Swift and others. On March 7th, 1711, the Dean speaks of dining with her in the genteel manner affected by M.D. [My Dears: Mrs. Johnson, mother of Stella (living with Lady Giffard) and Mrs. Dingley, Stella's companion in Dublin]; when they wanted to treat some better sort of body than usual.

Two entries in the *Journal to Stella* picture Catharine as doing pretty well what she liked in Newton's house.

> October 9th, 1711.—"Did I tell you that my friend, Mrs. Barton, has a brother drowned, that went in the [ill-starred] expedition [to Quebec] with Jack Hill [Mrs. Masham's brother]? He was a Lieut. Col. and a coxcomb; and she keeps her chamber in form, and the servants say she receives no messages."

> October 14th, 1711.—"I sat this evening with Mrs. Barton; it is the first day of her seeing company, but I made her merry enough, and was there three hours disputing upon Whig and Tory. She grieved for her brother only for form, and he is a sad dog."

During those three hours the philosopher Newton seems to have left them wholly undisturbed.

Swift's object in cultivating Miss Barton's society was to pass a pleasant

hour or two with a pretty and most intelligent young woman, and to obtain from her the latest political information. That he looked upon her as one of his political informants he frankly confessed in a letter to his friend, Robert Hunter, then a prisoner of the French: "March 22nd, 1709. Mrs. Barton is still in my good graces. I design to make her tell me when you are to be redeemed. . . ." The best intelligence he got from the ladies, for the Ministers never told him anything, Mr. Addison,[1] though a friend, being "ten times more secretive than anybody else".

Estranged from Halifax, who was in a position to learn important news quickly, Swift clung all the more tenaciously to Catharine Barton as his likeliest source of enlightenment, though it is doubtful whether she gave away any valuable secrets. On her part, she cherished the intimacy for its entertainment value. Swift with his witty and daring talk amused her. Everybody knew they were close friends, and it is significant that in the last years of Anne's life, when the triumphant Tories wanted more lucrative jobs for their friends, Swift was urged by Bolingbroke to sound her on the willingness or otherwise of her uncle to exchange the Mint position for a pension of £2,000 a year. Though assured that the idea was to give him the chance of uninterruptedly pursuing his scientific studies, Newton was not impressed and sent back word, "My place is at their [the Government] service, but I will have no pension."

According to certain family memoranda left by Conduitt, his wife [Catharine Barton] lived with her uncle before and after her marriage with him nearly twenty years. As it is unlikely she began sharing house with Sir Isaac Newton until 1701, when she was 22, and as he died in 1727, there remain six years to account for. How were these years spent? Brewster suggests with her husband, as one would expect, which would mean part of the period 1717–27. De Morgan, obsessed with his secret marriage theory, says with Halifax, which would cover the years 1707–13–14. But, once more, it must be emphasised that there is not the slightest evidence that Miss Barton lived under Halifax's roof, either as wife, mistress, or housekeeper, for as long as a month, let alone six full years. Undoubtedly she passed some months away from her uncle in lodgings with Mrs. Long, or in visiting friends in the country, but the period of absence was strictly limited, and for a very good reason. Apart from the annuity from the Trust Fund, she had little or no money of her own and was entirely dependent upon what her uncle chose to allow her. It is hardly likely, therefore, even when her comrade, Anne Long, was in a position to share expenses, that she remained away from Newton's house for more than a few months. That she should live with Conduitt, after marriage, in an establishment of her own seems reasonable enough, and it is difficult to see how so obvious an explanation of the gap can be challenged.

. . . . . .

In 1712, or six years after drawing up the original codicil, Halifax felt that he ought to make more substantial provision for the young woman

[1] Addison was Under-Secretary of State until the fall of Sunderland, when he became secretary to Wharton, Viceroy of Ireland.

for whom he professed to cherish such affection. The years had gone by, substantially reducing her chance of a brilliant marriage other than to him. With no rich estate to make up for the lost bloom of youth, and with Mrs. Manley's scandal-sheets proclaiming her Halifax's overbearing mistress, where in that company of professed fortune-hunters, assuming she wished to change her spinster state, was she to find a husband to please her fastidious and exacting taste? Some powerful motive clearly accounted for her being brought to such a pass. What more feasible than the hope of one day becoming the wife of the man who, for his own pleasure, took up so much of her time, and who, in the years gone by, had made her feel compelled to reject all other offers of marriage?

Without such a strong inducement, it is inconceivable—opposed to all one knows of human nature in general and feminine psychology in particular—that a woman of her intelligence and charm should, to the detriment of her reputation and the destruction of her hopes of marrying well elsewhere, have allowed herself, year after year, to be monopolized by her uncle's greatest friend.

The codicil which, on September 1st, 1712, he prepared with his own hand, had an air of finality about it, as though the testator feared he might die suddenly, or had come to definite conclusions about his future course of life. It is more than likely that any thought of marrying Catharine Barton had been driven out of his head by the dread of sharing the miserable and uneasy lot of his friend, the Duke of Shrewsbury, since marrying his eccentric and wilful Italian mistress.

Actually he was to die rather more than three years after making this extra provision for Newton's niece, but the probabilities are that, even if he had been spared another ten years, he would still have remained of the same opinion about her. Marriage with such an untamed and untameable creature as Catharine Barton was a tremendous risk, and in playing for safety he remained true to form.

What, we may well ask, would his feelings have been had it been permitted him to gaze into the future? He would have seen destiny, as though bent on mocking his timidity, creating Catharine Barton, whom he hesitated to make his Countess, not an Earl's wife, but the grandmother of an Earl—John Wallop, 2nd Earl of Portsmouth. But no prophetic instinct guided Halifax's hand as he set down his last wishes regarding her. She would be rich and live out her life in peace and comfort, but as to being the ancestress of an ennobled family, which would be still represented in the peerage long after his own earldom had petered out—mercifully that disturbing vision was withheld from him.

Having left Sir Isaac Newton, previously mentioned in his will, £100 as a mark of the honour and esteem he had for so great a man, he now bequeathed to Mrs. Catharine Barton [the correct way in 1712 of describing a spinster] in addition to £5,000, the right, title, and interest he had in a grant from the Crown of the Rangership and Lodge[1] of Bushey Park,[1] together with all the household goods, furniture, etc., belonging to the house, gardens, and park. To enable her to keep the house and gardens in repair and good order,

[1] Lately restored by Halifax at considerable expense.

he gave her, too, the manor of Apscourt, Surrey, also for the term of her life, together with all the rents, profits, and advantages attaching. "These gifts and legacies," added the testator, "I leave to her as a token of the sincere love, affection and esteem I have long had for her person, and as a small recompense for the pleasure and happiness I have had in her conversation. And I strictly charge and command my Executor to give all aid . . . to her in possessing and enjoying what I have hereby given her; and also in doing any act or acts necessary to transfer to her an annuity of two hundred pounds per annum, purchased in Sir Isaac Newton's name, which I hold for her in trust, as appears by a declaration of trust in that behalf." In no more convincing language, short of asking her to become his wife, could Halifax have borne witness to the strength of the bond which, for twelve years, had existed between him and the woman whose future he was now safeguarding.

Curiously enough, he failed to have witnessed either this codicil, or a further one cancelling the bequest to Miss Barton in the original will, which, along with a memorandum, similarly unwitnessed, was added at an interval of three months—August 30th, 1713. Did he believe that all three papers, being in his own handwriting, would be admitted to probate? Or was he so obsessed with the need for secrecy that he took the risk of leaving the documents unattested, presumably having first satisfied himself that his heir and executor, his nephew, George Montagu, the future 2nd Earl of Halifax, would faithfully carry out his orders? That nephew had every reason to be loyal, since he was being left a fortune, a peerage, and in due course would secure the reversion of the Auditorship of the Exchequer, worth in peacetime £4,000 a year.

The codicil of August 30th ran: "In case there be no dispute upon the codicil of the first of February, 1712, which I enjoin my executor not to make . . . I revoke . . . the codicil of 12th April, 1706." This meant that his jewels and £3,000 in money were not to go to Miss Barton, but as he had left her money and real estate valued at £20,000[1] or more, he obviously felt that she had little cause for complaint. But the probabilities are that he had also provided for her, privately, on a liberal scale. In marrying on July 12th, 1740, John Wallop, son and heir of the future 1st Earl of Portsmouth, her daughter Catharine was reputed to have in possession or reversion a fortune of £60,000.[2] With the exception of a property at Kensington, worth £4,000, left her by Sir Isaac Newton, this estate could only have come from her mother, Mrs. Conduitt, her father, though Master of the Mint, being only moderately well-off. All that Catharine Barton received under her uncle's will was an eighth of his fortune—£4,000 in all.

[1] A contemporary estimate.

[2] *The Gentleman's Magazine.* Repeated also in *The Complete Peerage.* Catharine Wallop, subsequently Viscountess Lymington, was the mother of John Wallop, 2nd Earl of Portsmouth, born June 29th, 1742, through whose offspring the line has been continued. Viscount Lymington died on November 19th, 1749, and she on April 15th, 1750, aged 28. Newton's grand-niece marrying into the Wallop family accounts for the possession by the Earls of Portsmouth of the valuable scientific and biographical material of which Sir David Brewster, when compiling his biography of Newton, was to make such ample use.

The memorandum of the same date is simply explanatory: "The interlineations and eliminations in this [the new] codicil being all of my own handwriting, ought to make no alterations of this my last Will and Testament." As for the remark cancelling the original codicil, "in case there be no dispute", it was doubtless intended as a check on his nephew. If for some reason or other he opposed the last codicil and was unsuccessful, he stood to lose all the Earl's jewels and £3,000 besides. It only remains to be said that the unattested documents were admitted to probate and the Earl's wishes honourably carried out.

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All Halifax's actions were carefully deliberated, not least his last completed instructions—August 30th, 1713—regarding Miss Barton. On January 16th of that same year the Earl of Carbery had died, and the Lady Anne Vaughan, with £4,000 a year and much valuable property besides, indeed, one of the richest women in England, was free to marry whom she pleased. Halifax, in his fifty-second year, could scarcely hope to compete with the young men, all heirs to great titles, who came flocking round her.[1] As it happened, the favoured suitor was Charles Powlett, the future 3rd Duke of Bolton, who was twenty-four years younger than Halifax, and, possibly because of his frivolous temperament, the least suitable of all the candidates for her hand. They were married on July 21st, 1713, and soon afterwards parted. Some said that the bridegroom's æsthetic sensibilities were offended by her ultra-plain appearance, others that he could not abide her pious ways. Thirty-nine years later he married Lavinia Fenton, the actress [born in 1708], who for twenty-three years had patiently awaited the day when she could change from mistress to wife.

Forty days after Lady Anne Vaughan's marriage, apparently persuaded he was not destined to marry again, at least an heiress of title,[2] Halifax signed the last known document in which he was to mention Catharine Barton, then within two months of her thirty-fourth birthday. That by his actions, firstly in marrying a grandmother, and secondly in making wealth and rank a condition of a second marriage, he would appear to subordinate the common human passions, such as a desire for legitimately-born children of his own, to his worldly ambitions, points to some marked emotional deficiency in his make-up, the cause, no doubt, of his failure as a poet.

To desire a successor born of his own flesh was a craving common to every Montagu with a substantial stake in the country. In his failings, as much as in his virtues, the typical Montagu was always extremely human, and rare was it to meet one whose nature ran to coldness. Ralph Montagu may have been as big a rascal as he was pictured, but from the moment of becoming the father of a son, he pursued no ambition that, primarily, was not intended to benefit his heir. It was to leave his son an exalted title and a great estate that he continued his ceaseless chase after wealth and honours. To the extent of being a most dutiful father, centring his hopes

[1] "Lord Halifax was disappointed in a second marriage."—*Biog. Brit.*
[2] See last note.

in his offspring, he was a representative Montagu. On the other hand, Charles Montague, who allowed ambition and a faulty sense of values to shape his life, has little right to be so considered. He first married a woman past childbearing age, and then when he had a chance of wedding a young woman, suited in every way to be his wife, he drew back, apparently because she was neither an heiress nor born of ennobled stock, as though to be niece of Sir Isaac Newton were not nobility enough.

Having regard to the extensive distribution of Mrs. Manley's book, the publication of Lord Halifax's will, with its particularly tender references to Catharine Barton, was bound to evoke unpleasant comment. There were not wanting ill-natured people to argue that the word "conversation" used by the Earl could be understood in the sense of sexual intercourse. Among these was John Flamsteed, the Astronomer Royal, who never missed a chance of calumniating Newton, once indiscreet enough to call him "a puppy". On July 9th [1715], or three months after Halifax's death, Flamsteed in a spiteful letter to a friend remarked, "I doubt not but you have heard that Lord Halifax is dead of a violent fever. If common fame be true, he died worth £150,000, out of which he gave Mrs. Barton, Sir I. Newton's niece, for her *excellent conversation* [italicised by Flamsteed], a curious house, £5,000 with lands, jewels, plate, money, and household furniture to the value of £20,000 or more. . . . Sir I. Newton loses his support in him, and having been in with Lord Oxford, Bolingbroke, and Dr. Arbuthnot, is not now looked upon as he was formerly." The last statement was quite untrue. Flamsteed, like others jealous of Newton's attainments, did not mind what missile he used to hurl at the philosopher. The last thing he was concerned about were the pretty niece's morals.

Whatever the truth of the relationship between Mrs. Barton and Halifax, it may be certain that Newton's part in the business was entirely blameless. He trusted both completely. More than Mrs. Manley's tirade was required to shake his faith in them. If they deceived him, that was not his fault. The man who was everywhere esteemed for his piety and virtue, who in no uncertain language had rebuked his profligate nephew, a clergyman, for his wanton behaviour, who on being told a coarse story by J. F. Vigani, the Italian lecturer in Chemistry at Trinity College, broke off an intimacy of several years—such a man was not likely to be a knowing party to the debasement of his own niece. Newton, it must be remembered, lived in a world of his own, far removed from that in which ordinary men and women passed their lives, and was so absent-minded that he would wander out of doors half-dressed, expressing surprise when told his toilet was incomplete. When crossed, he was capable of the most violent vituperation, not hesitating to call Sir Hans Sloane, the Secretary of the Royal Society, "a tricky fellow, a villain and a rascal", nor, had he thought Halifax an equally suitable target for his abuse, would he have spared him, friend or no friend.

Professor De Morgan, supporting his marriage theory, contends that Newton could not help knowing that Halifax and Catharine Barton were lovers, married or otherwise. But the whole of his case hangs on the uncorroborated assertion in the 1715 biography of the statesman that she was

designated as superintendent of the Earl's house, which intention, if ever contemplated, must soon have been abandoned as dangerous and imprudent. The absence of the slightest evidence that the pair at any time shared the same house is forcibly stressed by Sir David Brewster. That they lived together secretly is largely a matter of conjecture. Even Gilly Williams produces no stronger proof of the alleged liaison than that Lord Halifax was in the habit of calling on the lady regularly at 9 p.m.

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Taught by her noble admirer that to reply to scandalous comment was only to give it a fresh airing, Miss Barton continued to ignore what was said and to discourage even the slightest allusion to the subject. Her friends rallied round her, and by their presence at the delightful entertainments which she, now a rich woman, could afford to give at Newton's house, showed that she occupied no less distinguished a place than before in their esteem. She had the satisfaction of being sought after by leading scientists both here and in France, all anxious to obtain an introduction to Newton. In language much more extravagant than that used by Halifax in his will, M. Remond de Montmort, the French mathematician, who paid her a visit in 1715, extolled her wit, intelligence, and beauty, which report, he insisted, had not exaggerated.

After marrying John Conduitt, M.P.,[1] of Cranbury, Hampshire, first assistant and then successor to Newton at the Mint, who was nine years younger than herself, she continued to reside with her uncle whenever she was in London. Foreign scientists desirous of knowing more of her uncle's life invariably applied to her, and in 1727, or just before Newton's death, she helped to supply Fontenelle with materials for his *éloge* of the philosopher. The marriage, which brought happiness to both, was blessed in 1718 by the birth of a daughter, named Catharine, after the mother. The grand-uncle (Newton) was particularly fond of the child and bestowed on her the estate at Kensington already mentioned. From Miss Conduitt, afterwards Viscountess Lymington, the estate descended to her son, the 2nd Earl of Portsmouth, who sold it. Had he been wise enough to entail the property instead of disposing of it, his descendants to-day would be the richer by many thousands of pounds.

Though, after her uncle's death, Mrs. Conduitt's health appeared to decline, she showed no loss of mental vigour, and frequently treated her friends to choice examples of the old familiar wit, and, it must be added, the accustomed pertness. Answering Mrs. Clayton, afterwards Lady Sundon[2] (a great favourite with Duchess Sarah, and through her made Bedchamber Woman to the Princess of Wales), who had inquired respecting the Nottinghamshire election, she wrote, " You are at full liberty to undeceive those Ministers who have an interest in Nottinghamshire, who were the only persons who

[1] Conduitt, like Halifax, went to Westminster and Trinity College. He was M.P. for Whitchurch from 1715 to 1728, and from 1734 M.P. for Southampton.

[2] Bubb Dodington, explaining the laughter of Lord Sundon at a meeting of the Treasury, said he was laughing at something he had said at a previous meeting of the Board.

thought themselves aggrieved. A good-for-nothing Courtier will never want such an apology. An accusation which is founded upon good works is of the same nature as the sin against the Holy Ghost, from which, good Lord deliver us!"

On May 1st, 1733, she asked Mrs. Clayton to help her obtain for Mrs. Burr,[1] another niece of Newton's, a dresser's place to the Princess Royal, the rich father-in-law having declined to assist his son. To be placed in the Royal family, in whose cause her own had signalized themselves, would, it was said, make the lady supremely happy.

Swift, having long lost sight of his charming friend, unexpectedly came across her at Court in 1727, the year of Newton's death, and, as he told Lady Worsley (April, 1731), thought her almost dwindled to an echo, indeed, hardly recognizable. He had forgotten her married name and sought the latest news of her. But not until November 29th, 1733, was he rewarded by a characteristically piquant letter from her: "I should have guessed your holiness would rather have laid than called up the ghost of my departed friendship, which, since you are brave enough to face, you will find divested of every terror, but the remorse that you were abandoned to be an alien to your friends, your country and yourself. Not to renew an acquaintance with one who can, twenty years after, remember a bare intention to revive him, would be to throw away a prize I am not now able to repurchase."

The rest of the story is soon told. Conduitt died on May 20th, 1737, in his forty-ninth year, a monument to his memory being erected by his sorrowing widow in Westminster Abbey. She was in poor health at the time, and her own death followed on January 20th, 1739, or soon after she had turned 58. The daughter, Viscountess Lymington, who had inherited her father's delicate physique, passed away in 1750 at the early age of 32, leaving one daughter and four sons, from the eldest of whom all the Earls of Portsmouth, save the first, are descended.

Neither the Newton family papers, nor any of the notes left behind by Conduitt, were destined to throw the least light on the relationship between Lord Halifax and Catharine Barton. Of the hundreds of letters which in the course of their thirteen years' intimacy they must have exchanged [Mrs. Manley said Lord Halifax wrote Catharine every day] not a single one seems to have survived, and those who conclude that the letters were not meant to survive would seem to have good cause for their belief. It looks as if all concerned decided that the best answer to the interpretation put on the relationship by Mrs. Manley, Flamsteed, and others, was to offer no comment or provide fresh material for comment. The world could believe what it chose to believe.

So the relationship of Halifax and Catharine Barton passes into the long list of unsolved historical enigmas. Convinced that human nature never changes, the historical researcher may, on the facts submitted, come to a certain conclusion, but an element of doubt must always attach to his verdict, and the way of wisdom is to pretend to no more than an individual expression of opinion. Andrew Lang, an untiring prober into such mysteries,

[1] Daughter of Lieut.-Col. Barton, brother of Mrs. Conduitt.

very pertinently remarked that whoever discussed these riddles pleased the public best by being quite sure of offering a definite and certain solution, but, unluckily, science forbade and conscience was on the same side. Those irreproachable sentiments should serve as a salutary warning to all who pretend categorically to answer what lay behind the friendship of the Whig Earl and Newton's pretty niece.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A REGULAR CARD

JOHN, 2nd Duke of Montagu, only surviving son of Ralph Montagu, was what we should call to-day "a regular card"—a very odd fellow. As such, he attracted tremendous notoriety and might have attracted still more, had not the period been rich in queer characters, each with his or her particular brand of oddity vigorously competing for attention. However remarkable his eccentricities, they were usually reducible to some form of logic, if only that of a man who deemed the quest of happiness the main purpose of existence, or were consistent with some human philosophy of life in which the struggle for wealth, honours and power failed to oust more generous activities.

What distinguished him from most other eccentrics of the contemporary scene were his likeable qualities. His antics were not intended to be harmful or offensive and rarely worked out as such, nor as a rule were they at the expense of his dignity. In his most unrestrained moments he never sank to the level of Philip, Duke of Wharton (1698–1731), who signalized his succession by arriving home with a young bear fastened to the axle of his coach; neither did he fall as low as the Duc Mazarin, who, to save his wife and maids from getting wrong ideas, mutilated priceless paintings and disfigured magnificent statues. His oddity was not fed by delusions, the unhappy state of Henri Jules de Bourbon, Prince de Condé (1643–1709) who, convinced he was dead, refused nourishment on the ground that departed spirits never ate, and was only saved from starvation by the ready wit of his doctor in persuading him to join at meals three other dead men accustomed to eat—scandalous conduct which must have shocked the other world.[1]

Fortunately, too, for Montagu, he was not absent-minded like the Duc de Sully, who went to church one winter's day without his breeches and attributed his fits of shivering to being feverish. He was vain, as he showed when instructing Kneller, who was painting his portrait for the Kit-Kat Club, to include the Blue Ribbon of the Garter, which later had to be erased owing to the unexpected non-arrival of the honour.[2] Yet compared with the proud 6th Duke of Somerset or the Duchess of Buckinghamshire, natural daughter of James II, he was only mildly conceited. When shutting his eyes preparatory to forty winks, the Duke insisted on a daughter watching over him, and, on the young woman herself happening to fall asleep, penalized her in his will. The dying instruction of the Duchess, who called herself Princess of Buckinghamshire, was that her attendants should remain standing until they were quite certain all breath had left her body.

If Montagu had any counterpart, it was that peculiar fellow, the Earl of

[1] *Letters in the Library at Welbeck*, compiled by S. Arthur Strong.

[2] The Duke was not made a K.G. until March 31st, 1718, or possibly three years after his portrait was executed.

Peterborough, who, wearing his Blue Ribbon and Star, thought it not amiss to walk home with a cabbage under each arm, or a chicken in his hand purchased at market for his dinner. Such contempt for appearances, however, was no more to prevent him from distinguishing himself in various fields of endeavour, than Montagu's comicalities were to hinder him from attaining positions of dignity and importance.

History, it should be said at once, has curiously misrepresented the Duke. It has sought to convey the impression that he was just a buffoon or, at best, an amusing eccentric; whereas he was a man of fine parts who managed to sandwich between many humorous and kindly exploits a considerable amount of useful service for the country, though, admittedly, at no time a glutton for work. So far from being the fool his irate mother-in-law, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, pictured him, he was shrewd in business, with ever a keen eye to the main chance, though seldom to the detriment of his comfort or principles. Determined to get the utmost enjoyment out of life, he scorned opportunities for advancement which would have enslaved him, depriving him of those intervals for leisure which he regarded as indispensable to his wellbeing. Since this leisure was intended not only for his own delight and recreation, but for the betterment of men less fortunately placed than himself, his attitude was wholly defensible, indeed, commendable.

Maligned by the Duchess of Marlborough and ill-served by the emphasis which, consciously or otherwise, he placed on the lighter sides of his buoyant and joyous nature, he has come down to posterity robbed not only of his full stature, but dwarfed to the point of being unrecognisable as one of the most interesting and original figures of the epoch. The hoaxer, the practical joker, the frivolous fellow with a love of wild horseplay, all give colour, tone, and outline to the crude portrait masquerading as a tolerable likeness, but in it we look vainly for the philanthropist, the man of generous heart, the patron of the opera and drama, the wit, the champion of Freemasonry, the connoisseur of a kindly way of life. A better-hearted man never lived. "He did good without ostentation", said Lord Hailes of him in a memorable tribute. "His vast benevolence of soul is not recorded by Pope, but it will be remembered while there is any tradition of human kindness and charity in England."[1]

According to Horace Walpole, who knew him well and often heard his father, Sir Robert Walpole, discuss him, the Duke gave away in pensions no less than £2,700 out of a total income of £17,000, and this large sum represented only a proportion of his outlay in charity. Many of his generous acts were hallmarked by an eccentric elaboration peculiarly his own, though they were no less meritorious on that account. Often the explanation did honour to the Duke's goodness of heart—his desire to save the recipient of his bounty embarrassment, and himself the ordeal of being thanked in person. Still, he was an undeniably queer fellow, and not to be surprised at anything he did, whether from generous or frivolous motives, was the most sensible way of taking him.

[1] *The Opinions of the Duchess*, by Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes; a rare little eighteenth-century volume.

An odd note, varying in prominence with his mood, pervaded the great mass of his activities (the purely official excepted), at times so ingenuous as to suggest the agency of a playboy who had never completely grown up. His foibles and caprices owed little or nothing to environment or pressure of circumstance, but were the promptings of a puckish nature markedly eccentric from birth. That he preferred to follow his own course in life and adhere to standards of value other than those to which his conventionally-minded and money-grubbing relatives subscribed, did not constitute eccentricity on his part, though they hastened to proclaim it as such. If, for years, he evaded onerous responsibility and was content with dignified, rather decorative, appointments in whose tenure was involved no sacrifice of congenial hobbies and pursuits, that was not being, as they suggested, queer or cranky, but, in the light of his real motives, eminently sensible. Until he had seen the world, sown his wild oats, and was ready to settle down to a more humdrum form of existence than at first seemed tolerable, he had every excuse, every justification, for not joining in the feverish scramble for jobs which, among the privileged class, was considered the correct thing. Like Shrewsbury, who was destined to be such a decisive factor in political history, he craved an existence freed from drudgery, with room for travel and constant change. He was not cut out to be a maker or destroyer of Cabinets, and even when at long last he was promoted to the Cabinet Council, he advanced no claims to great statesmanship.

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If those who rose to position and power in the eighteenth century were judged entirely on their merits, then the Duke of Montagu had little reason to complain of the way he was rewarded. But, as we know, influence counted for as much as ability, and by this criterion he cannot be said to have fared too well, since all the major prizes of office were denied him. Yet he was no more backward than his pushful and unscrupulous father in asking for an occasional plum, as witness his application to Lord Carteret in 1723 for the post of Constable of the Tower, which, however, had already been allotted to Lord Lincoln.[1]

Only when he had turned forty did he appear to bestir himself in order to qualify for office of first-class importance. In the interim his exasperated connections, with little sympathy for, and less understanding of, the niceties of his strange nature, regretfully concluded that if there was anything special about him, it must be his unrivalled genius for getting nowhere in particular with the greatest possible amount of fuss. They were neither impressed by his many decorations—such as the Garter and the Order of the Bath—nor with his ornamental offices, varying from that of Lord High Constable of England at the Coronation of George I., and bearer of the Sceptre with the Cross at the Coronation of George II. Such coveted appointments as Captain and Colonel of the 1st Troop of Horse Guards, Lord Justice of the Realm or Regent, Lord Lieutenant of Northampton and Warwick, they thought little more than graceful compliments. Only when, in

[1] Buccleuch MSS., Vol. I.

1734, he became Captain of the Band of Gentlemen Pensioners,[1] a position of great dignity given only to those high in royal esteem, and in 1740 was promoted Master-General of Ordnance, an office of extreme importance originally held by Marlborough and carrying with it Cabinet rank,[2] did they begin to waver in their opinion and think there might be something in him, after all. With the exception of the Blue Ribbon, none of his triumphs would have been regarded by his aspiring father as fulfilment of the hopes reposed in him, and had he been able to pronounce judgment on his son, he would, beyond a doubt, have proclaimed him in respect to achievement a truant to the most honoured Montagu traditions.

The difference between father and son was the difference between a man who thought wealth (and all it could bring), position and power were mostly what mattered in life, and a man who, while thoroughly aware of their importance and by no means averse to generous helpings of all three, reckoned these things secondary to the happiness which comes from following one's bent and from possessing a good conscience. We repeat, there is no record of his accepting either office or decoration at the expense of his principles or self-respect. Unlike his parent, he never sold his honour.

When Sir Robert Walpole, "who had a great opinion of his understanding",[3] pressed him to take a General's command, he declined on the ground that he had seen little active service ; nor, as a consequence of that refusal, would it have worried him to be branded as stupid and quixotic. He was used to being berated by his redoubtable mother-in-law for his want of sense and ambition and for the way he muffed his chances of advancement. A little more abuse was unlikely to make much difference to his equanimity.

There were moments when he tasted the sweets of revenge, as on December 18th, 1714, when, sinking her pride, Duchess Sarah asked him, in his capacity as Master of the Great Wardrobe, to put her right, monetarily, with that other uncomfortable Montagu, Lord Halifax, Chief Commissioner of the Treasury. As Mistress of the Robes to Queen Anne, she had been authorised by the 1st Duke of Montagu, then in the same position as his son, to spend the sum of £2,297 10s. on articles of attire for Her Majesty. The money was temporarily borrowed out of the Privy Purse, on the understanding that it was to be returned as soon as the Great Wardrobe paid up. Finding among the Treasury papers a record of the borrowing signed by the Duchess, Lord Halifax had debited Her Grace's account to the extent of the amount in question, which money she now invited her son-in-law to refund.[4]

Apart from a weakness for play-acting, the Duke seems to have inherited few of his father's outstanding traits. That gentleman, it will be remembered, wooed and won the crazy Duchess of Albemarle by pretending to be Emperor of China. Most of his qualities the Duke got from his gentle mother, the Countess of Northumberland, and it was because Sarah and

[1] The Captain of the Band, at its formation in 1509, was Henry Bourchier, Earl of Essex, whose mother was sister of the queen of Edward IV. and the grandmother of Henry VIII. Only latterly was the Captain sworn, and then by the Lord Chamberlain in person. He carried as ensign of office an ebony staff with a gold head. Members of the Band were looked upon as recruiting material for innumerable posts of profit and honour in the State.

[2] *Lord Hervey's Memoirs.*

[3] Horace Walpole's *Letters.*

[4] Buccleuch MSS., Vol. I.

others expected him to be a second edition of his father, that is, cunning and adroit to the *n*th degree, that they were so woefully disappointed. They gave him no credit for being a much more original and amiable character, though not so forceful a one.

By none was the death of the elder Montagu more regretted than by the Churchill couple, who, much too early for their comfort and peace of mind, found themselves with a son-in-law on their hands more awkward to manage than they had bargained for. Not only did he mock their standards of success, but by his diffidence and evasions appeared to regard getting on in the world as a regrettable necessity to be avoided as long as possible by all right-minded people. At first they hesitated to take his heretical utterances as serious, mercifully attributing them to an exaggerated and misplaced sense of fun, but once they realised he was not fooling, their half-amused attitude turned to one of pained perplexity. It would be truer to say *returned*, because ever since his marriage to their youngest daughter, Mary, they had been puzzled by the vagaries of his outlook on life, gravely disturbing to people who held that life was a serious business and not an everlasting entertainment. Most disconcerting was the pride he took, not in his gifts, which were only faintly visible, but in his limitations, which positively shone by comparison.

In the spring of 1706, with the rather hazy and never fully-deliberated idea of following in Marlborough's footsteps, he had volunteered for service, accompanying his go-ahead and ambitious kinsman, Lord Halifax, to Flanders. But his experience of the siege of Menin was sufficient to cure him of any desire to reap distinction in active campaigning, and, chancing the anger of Halifax and the annoyance of his father, who fondly visualized him as a Marshal in the making, he returned to England to take up more civilized pursuits. It was not that he lacked courage and patriotism—simply that he could not stand carnage.

Henceforth, his soldiering was to be confined to battles won on the parade ground. As he was then only 16, much could be excused him on the ground of extreme youth, but as the years passed with little alteration in his attitude, Sarah, shrewd and practical-minded, swore that her son-in-law had not matured and never would; more, he had only to be assured that a particular undertaking was certain to yield neither profit nor distinction, to espouse it immediately with terrifying ardour. His enthusiasms, in her opinion, were wholly reserved for infantile or preposterous enterprises. She exaggerated, of course, as all vehemently-opinionated people are liable to do, but her remarks had considerable justification.

He would waste days devising quite unnecessary changes of attire for a fancy dress ball at his Bloomsbury mansion, and then openly lament that a sixth change had not been possible.[1] He was inclined to do everything to excess, with the result that even his enormous income, supplemented by sales of land—in 1718 he sold his estate in Kent to James Craggs, the Postmaster-General, for £14,400—failed to keep him out of debt. His father-in-law, who had a good money-brain and was economical besides, suggested he should dispose of Montagu House and, with the £40,000 likely to be

[1] *Lyme Letters;* edited by Lady Newton.

obtained, straighten out his affairs, residing for the future either in a rented or a purchased house of modest dimensions.[1] It was sound advice, but Montagu was not moving until assured of an equally commodious and centrally-situated abode. Only when he had built the new Montagu House in Privy Gardens, Whitehall, which was ten years after Marlborough's death, did he choose to vacate the mansion erected by his father.[2]

Here it should be stated the young Duke had too much regard for his illustrious father-in-law to want to go out of his way to annoy him, and would always stand when the General was at meals, countenancing the great man's habit of eating alone after being created by the Emperor Prince of the Empire.[3] Nevertheless, if he disagreed with Marlborough on any matter affecting himself, he never hesitated to oppose him. The General esteemed him for his honesty, though dubious of his wisdom. He remembered how at the time of his fall, the young Duke had elected to follow his fortunes, and in a world packed with rogues it was no small thing to meet an honest man. So he paid him the finest of all compliments by appointing him a trustee of his will, and it is common history that the most impressive figure at his funeral was Montagu in the rôle of chief mourner.

According to Sarah, her son-in-law was quite hazy on the subject of his father-in-law's death, and showed it during the legal proceedings that followed the reading of Marlborough's will.[4] "When I was at the Court of Chancery", relates the Duchess with dry humour, "a lawyer on the part of his Grace of Montagu stood up and told the Chancellor that he knew nothing of the Duke of Marlborough's will, but confessed he had heard he was dead and *believed it.* It is easy to imagine how his Grace might happen to be of this belief, because he had been at his father-in-law's funeral."[5] Thereafter, Blenheim was barred to the Duke, and a porter who allowed him to pass through the outer gates was dismissed. In the nick of time a second porter shut the main door, swearing the Duke should not enter for love or money.[6]

. . . . . .

That was in 1724. Twenty years' experience of her queer son-in-law had been more than enough for the ageing Duchess, neither so patient nor so long-suffering as her dearly-lamented husband. The disgust which Montagu's caprices and moderate measure of success inspired in her she freely advertised in language that made up in abusiveness what it lacked in discretion. Every time she thought of him she was liable to a heart attack, so greatly did he exasperate her. With his future largely undetermined and his wife running around as the whim took her, he had taken up Freemasonry, Astronomy, Physics, Medicine, the Opera, the Drama and Building, and in between exercising his talent for elaborate hoaxes or practical jokes and inventing some new brand of itching powder, had concentrated on even more

[1] Churchill's *Marlborough*, Vol. I, Footnote.

[2] In 1753, or four years after the 2nd Duke's death, old Montagu House was bought by the nation as a home for the British Museum, but between 1840 and 1849 it was pulled down and a more convenient and modern building erected on the site.

[3] Lord Dartmouth's note to Burnet.

[4] Lady Godolphin contested the will, not considering she had been properly provided for.

[5], [6] *Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough*, by Kathleen Campbell.

novel methods of helping the cause of charity, though, as always, with an adverse balance to face at the end of the year.

Sarah waited until he was 52 before venturing to sum him up. It was a task quite beyond her capacity. For what understanding could she, who took life so seriously and made such a fetish of wealth, have of the soul of her eternally adolescent son-in-law, separated from her by an ever-widening gulf of mutual dislike? If partial and uninspired, the character she gave him was at any rate piquant and challenging enough to become an integral portion of the undying Montagu legend:

> "All his [Montagu's] talents lie in things only natural in boys of fifteen years old and he is two and fifty [52]: to get people into his garden and wet them with squirts, and to invite people to his country-houses and put things into their beds to make them itch, and twenty such pretty fancies as these. . . . He has a great estate, and is Master of the Grand Wardrobe, part of my daughter's portion which I got him for life, and I was assured by a very understanding man he would farm of him and give him £8,000 a year. He is not a man that has any demand on account of services done by sea or land."

A more imaginative and tolerant woman than Sarah was needed to appreciate the worth of a son-in-law whose self-proclaimed distinction was to appear different from the commonalty of people, unemotionally doing ordinary things in conventional fashion. Wasted on the Duchess with her unusually sober mentality were such prodigies of brilliant fancy as his dinner for people who stuttered—unluckily the guests thought each was mimicking the other and all finished up in a general mêlée—his feast for those who squinted, and, not least, his banquet for grave and reserved professional men, who, when later in the evening they came to adjust their wigs in the mirrors, thought they were too drunk to see straight, the mirrors being of the distorting kind.

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That the Duke was puckish—possessed by the imp of mischief—will hardly bear contradiction. He loved to envisage important-looking people in ridiculous situations, and only in the elaborate hoaxes for which he was to become famous could his over-developed sense of drollery find adequate expression. From the host of quaint exploits to his credit three typical examples may be cited. The first relates to Count Heidegger, the Swiss-born impresario, who specialised in masquerades. At his next performance the king intended to be present, and Montagu thought to improve the occasion by an item in the programme of his own devising. He proposed introducing a double of Heidegger. As the Count, who had the reputation of being the ugliest man in the kingdom, had been careful not to have his portrait painted, it was necessary to lure him to the Devil Tavern, Temple Bar, ply him with drink till he was insensible, and then take a wax mould of his features, from which a mask, coloured exactly to resemble the original, could be made.

Next, the impresario's valet was bribed to disclose the dress his master

would wear at the masquerade, so that when the great evening arrived a perfect double, both as to features, shape and attire, was ready to enact his allotted part. When the king entered the theatre, Heidegger, faithful to custom, instructed the musicians to play "God Save the King", but directly his back was turned, the counterfeit appeared and ordered them to strike up the objectionable Jacobite air "Over the Water to Charley", which, being parties to the plot, they did with great fervour. Astonished and enraged, Heidegger flew to the music-gallery and accused the orchestra either of being drunk or intending his ruin. Thus rebuked, they went back to "God Save the King". Heidegger, however, had again to leave them, whereupon the bogus Count, imitating Heidegger's voice, called out, "Damn you, blockheads, have I not just told you to play 'Over the Water to Charley'?"

At this stage Montagu deemed it opportune to warn the wretched impresario that the king was greatly enraged by the proceedings, and that before discharging the obviously drunken musicians, he had better make his peace with His Majesty. As the king, who with great difficulty had kept a straight face, was leaving the royal box, the double approached, and pointing to Heidegger, exclaimed, "It's not my fault, sire, but that devil's in my likeness!" The victim of the hoax seeming about to collapse, His Majesty mercifully ended the joke by ordering the counterfeit to take off his mask. "Here," says Sir John Hawkins, our authority for the episode, "ended the frolic, but Heidegger swore he would never attend any public amusement again unless that wretch, the waxwork woman [who took the cast of his features], be made to break the mould and melt down the mask before his face."

The second, the quart-bottle, hoax, was attended with more serious results. In January, 1749, destined to be the last year of the Duke's life, someone said to be acting on His Grace's behalf announced in the papers that, at the New Theatre in the Haymarket on Monday, the 16th inst., would be seen a person who undertook to perform the following wonders:

1. Imitating on a walking stick borrowed from the audience any and every known musical instrument.
2. Entering an ordinary tavern wine bottle, quart size, as it lay on a table on the stage, and when inside singing a song.
3. Revealing the identity of any member of the audience, however skilfully masked.
4. Permitting a conversation of several minutes with a departed spirit conjured up at the request of a particular member of the audience.

The prank, it is understood, had been prompted by the refusal of Lord Chesterfield and other noble friends of the Duke to credit his assertion that there was no limit to people's credulity. But at the sight of the vast audience which stormed the theatre on the evening in question, only too anxious to part with the price of admission, ranging from 2s. to 7s. 6d., they realised that Montagu had not spoken foolishly. The performance was timed to begin at 6.30 p.m., but by 7 p.m., in the absence of any sign of the miracle-worker, the audience began to grow restive, nor were they in the least

appeased by the announcement from the stage that, should the performer fail to show up, their money would be returned.

Commotion began when a wag proclaimed that if the people agreed to double the price of admission, the conjuror would go into a *pint*, not a quart, bottle, and developed into an actual riot when someone else threw a lighted candle on the stage.

In the vandalism that followed, the curtain was torn down, the chair seats slashed, the boxes hacked to pieces, and finally a great bonfire made of material dragged from the theatre. The Duke of Cumberland, " hero " of Culloden, endeavouring to extricate himself from the infuriated crowd, had his diamond-hilted sword snatched away from him, and on remonstrating with the rioters was answered by the taunt that Billy the Butcher had lost his knife.

The evening's damage amounted to a considerable sum, but the manager, who declared in the papers that he had been the victim of an unscrupulous scoundrel, got no redress. The Duke, on whom, naturally enough, suspicion fell, disclaimed all responsibility, and his death that summer automatically terminated any effort to bring home to him the authorship of the costly hoax. The fact that the management were careful not to bring his name into the affair rather suggests that he may have privately compensated them.

The third or Dartineuf,[1] hoax, was meant as a prank and happily ended as such. Montagu had invited this noted gourmet to dine with him at 6 p.m. but when, prompt to the minute, Dartineuf turned up, he was assured he had mistaken the hour, and since fine meals could not be improvised, he must be prepared to take pot-luck. Instead of the tempting meal for which he had saved himself, he was asked to exercise his teeth—and patience—on as tough a steak as ever saw a grill. While struggling in vain to masticate it, he was reproved by the Duke, who solemnly lectured him on the wisdom of adapting oneself to circumstances, advice which he was in no mood to appreciate. Wondering what would come next, he was requested to follow his host into an adjoining room, where, eagerly awaiting developments, sat several of the Duke's friends, who had been let into the secret. On the table was spread the most sumptuous feast imaginable, and to this, at a signal from the Duke, all present fell to with alacrity, not least Dartineuf, his appetite in no way dulled by realization of the joke played on him.

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Occasionally the Duke was himself hoaxed, a case of the biter bit. His friend, the 2nd Duke of Richmond, equally keen on a good joke—the pair were known to their intimates as *Clarissimo* and *Magnifico*—organised a fake highway robbery at St. Roche's Hill, Goodwood, the " victims " including the Duchess of Richmond, Lady Tankerville, Lady Hervey, Henry Fox [1st Lord Holland], and Dr. Wm. Sherwin, an unpopular Canon of Chichester, who was not party to the plot. The only clue to the masked highwaymen [the Duke and two of his friends], was a " confession ", rich in the argot of the thieving profession, in the disguised handwriting of his Grace. Full details of this *harrowing* experience were communicated to the

[1] Pope's spelling.

Duke of Montagu, who, completely taken in, wrote back tendering his sympathy and hoping that the highwaymen had been punished, as it would be unfortunate if they made the neighbourhood one of their haunts.[1]

Montagu could speak feelingly on the subject of highwaymen, to one of whose number he had been host. The fellow had stopped him at Finchley and robbed him of all he had about him, including an old family watch which, for sentimental reasons, he was loth to lose. The highwayman agreed to return it on condition that the Duke paid over to him at Montagu House the following morning a reasonable ransom—His Grace's own suggestion. He turned up as arranged, and when asked to explain why he chose to run the risk of being handed over to justice, replied that he was hazarding nothing, since the Duke's honour was his sure shield against treachery. Impressed by the answer His Grace bade him come to dinner that afternoon, a large party being invited to meet him. Full of anecdotes and most polished in manner, he enchanted his fellow-guests. When his hour for business arrived, he pleaded an engagement and politely withdrew. The others, declaring him with one voice to be the most gentlemanlike and agreeable man they had ever met, besought their host to reveal his name. "I am sure I don't know," was the Duke's truthful reply. "All I can tell you is that last night he stopped me on Finchley Common and cleaned me out of all of value."[2]

The Dukes of Montagu and Richmond were neighbours in Privy Gardens, and in the spring of 1744 they had an amusing controversy about a pet vixen which Lord George Lennox[3] had established in a snug kennel at Richmond House, much to the annoyance of Montagu next door. With a view to putting an end to the nuisance of the pungent smell which outraged his nostrils, he wrote his friend a most plaintive letter, which we reproduce minus the awful spelling: "Although we have been neighbours for some years, I have no personal acquaintance with him [the fox whose sex Montagu had mistaken]. I have, indeed, had the pleasure of seeing him several times in company with Lord March and Lord George, and have been pleased with his pretty behaviour, and, to be sure, he is a very agreeable pretty gentleman, and one whom I should be very glad to do any good office to, and therefore it is (without his having said one word to me about it, I do assure you) that I wish you would let him go into the country. I have not seen him lately, but since I have lived a good deal in my new room, as that is very near his lodgings, I have smelt him extremely, and I am sorry to say an unmannerly thing of so honest and agreeable a person and one I love so well, but the truth is he stinks like a fox, and is enough to poison the devil, and as I know his inclination is a rural life, if you would let him go into the country, I am sure it would oblige."

The Duke of Richmond could hardly fail to be impressed by such a charming note, and in due course the vixen was returned to the country.[4]

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Thanks to Montagu's commendable habit of preserving correspondence, we learn not only much of his private life, but also something of the trials

[1] *A Duke and his Friends*, by the Earl of March, 1911.
[2] *Notes and Queries.* [3] Son of the Duke of Richmond.
[4] *A Duke and his Friends.*

JOHN, 2ND DUKE OF MONTAGU
(After the portrait by Kneller)

MARY CHURCHILL, 2ND DUCHESS OF MONTAGU

which beset his ancestors. He treasured, for example, a letter sent by George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham, to Sir Ralph Winwood,[1] Secretary of State to James I., emphasising how impatient the king was, and how much he complained that Winwood had not disclosed to the Marquis de Gondomar, the Spanish Ambassador, the purpose and design of Sir Walter Ralegh's expedition to the West Indies. Ralegh returned to England in June, 1618, and his punishment for the burning of a Spanish settlement being demanded by Gondomar, he was beheaded on October 29th in pursuance of the death sentence (for which he had been reprieved) passed on him for conspiring against James.[2]

Montagu kept the letter which Mrs. Manley, the lady with the poison pen, wrote him in June, 1710, begging his acceptance of a play and imploring his financial assistance, as the bailiffs had distrained on her effects. An appeal from this lady was a polite form of blackmail, and it is probable that the Duke, who had no wish to see his wife pilloried in her pages, mollified her with a gift of money.

Another letter which he did not think fit to destroy was from a ballad-singer named Margareta Ryley, who complained that if she had failed to please the Duke and his friends at a recent musical performance, it was not her fault, but that of the material, quite unsuited to her voice, she had been supplied with. She asked for an opportunity of proving the quality of her voice in Italian or good English music with proper accompaniment.

The letter is interesting for the light it throws on the personal interest taken by the Duke in theatrical and musical affairs. On first nights, accompanied by a fellow peer or two, equally keen on the theatre or the opera, he sat in a stage-box, and signified by unmistakable gestures what he thought of the acting or singing. His disapproval was almost equivalent to a death sentence on the performer, but generally he was too kind-hearted to be condemnatory.

Much of his time and money went in the encouragement of the best plays and music. In December, 1721, he brought to the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, opened the previous year, a company designated as "The French Comedians of His Grace, the Duke of Montagu", but their début was not very successful, nor was their competition with native talent relished. From the Duke's correspondence, given in the Buccleuch MSS., we gain a useful idea of the nature of the difficulties he created for himself by his patronage of the drama and opera.

Most entertaining of all the letters addressed to His Grace is one quoted in the papers of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, which he endorsed with the words, "odd love-letter", and had not the heart to put in the fire. Handsome, and reputed to be enormously wealthy, he was a magnet for the more susceptible of the fair sex. The antiquary, Dr. William Stukeley, who speaks of him as very tall in stature, of a good shape and symmetry, says

[1] Winwood's daughter, Anne, it will be remembered, married in 1637 Edward, 2nd Lord Montagu, grandfather of the 2nd Duke.

[2] Horace Walpole, writing to Gray, mentions finding in a pocket-book belonging to George Vertue (the engraver and antiquary, whose notebooks provided so much of the material for his *Anecdotes of Painting in England*), a copy of this letter taken by Martin Folkes, President of the Royal Society.

his aspect was grand, manly and full of dignity, his carriage genteel and polite, and, when riding, grace personified.

This particular letter, signed *Incognito* and bearing an armorial seal, purported to be written by a friend of a clothier's daughter (though without her knowledge), who, having come to town with her father to buy her wedding-clothes and view the sights, had fallen in love with the Duke, whom she had chanced to see in the Mall. " Now, " went on the letter, " her spark is nothing to her, though the wedding-day was set—can't love him, won't marry him, or be persuaded to go into the country. Nor can the authority of a father now prevail, though he has carried down all the fine clothes. She falls sick, is left with her aunt where she is extremely melancholy, nor will she permit the abandoned spark to come up, though he begs it in the most passionate manner. . . . The distemper is love, though the object has been a secret till last week, when from her window which looks into the Park [the letter was addressed from Queen St., Westminster] she saw your Grace, cried out, ' Did you ever see so fine a man as the Duke of ——?', blushed, turned pale, fainted and fell into tears. Surprised at her folly I pity her, and as a woman have sworn to keep the great secret. For the world, your Grace, should not see her, yet she dwells at the window to feast her eyes once more. The design of this is to inform your Grace that she goes every day to one Mrs. Wharton's who sells Hollands and fine laces, and has an apartment at the *Spread Eagle and Hat* in Pall Mall. Your Grace in the habit of a private person may see if a maid who cannot look below a Duke deserves either scorn or pity. 'Tis true that she's a maid that's virtuous and witty, not old, nor ugly. I am her confidante and hope she'll never know I've played her false."

Alas! we have no means of knowing what answer, if any, the Duke gave to this appealing document, whose purpose may have been as honest as represented. That it struck a responsive note in his nature, which loved bizarre experience, is clear from his decision not to destroy it. With other relics it passed to successive Montagu generations, to be given to the world after a lapse of a hundred and fifty years, or long after the Dukes of Montagu had ceased their separate existence. The letter is ours to make of it what we can, to imagine a fairy-tale ending, the re-entry into the forlorn lady's life of the discarded but legitimate lover, or an ending such as Shakespeare might have contrived: the despairing plunge into eternal night.

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His Grace was a typical escapist, seeking refuge on every possible occasion in a world of make-believe soaked in the atmosphere of *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. On his errands of mercy it seemed natural to behave like some Haroun al-Raschid. It was a poor day's work which failed to yield him an adventure attuned to his fantastic nature. His days and nights were made memorable by exploits in the true spirit of romance. Driving through St. James's Park he often passed a shabbily-dressed ex-officer, whose habitually melancholic expression obviously testified to deep inward distress. He had inquiries made about him, only to find that the stranger was an impoverished captain on half-pay, weary of the vain search for

work. While he walked the streets of London, his wife and family, dependent on what he could spare them, remained in Yorkshire. The Duke invited him to dinner, explaining, before the meal was served, that his purpose in getting him there was to oblige a lady who had long had a regard for him. "You are making a fool of me," protested the indignant officer. "Follow me and see for yourself," replied the nobleman, ushering him into the dining-room. There, to his surprised delight, seated at the table he saw his wife and children who had been sent for. How should such a delightful tale end but in approved story-book fashion, the way contemplated by the tender-hearted Duke? The sorely-tried officer was given a deed entitling him to an adequate competency. "Don't thank me," remarked His Grace in an effort to stem the family's outpouring of gratitude. "I assure you it is the last thing I would do, if I knew a better way of employing my money."

Though trained never to be surprised at any of their noble master's caprices, the servants at Montagu House were sometimes at a loss to know what to do with suspicious-looking callers who, on all manner of pretexts, asked to see him. One day a cadaverous-looking man, tying his Rosinante of a beast to the gate, walked across the courtyard and aroused the porter. Seeing no prospect of a fee and little relishing the lean look of the man, the porter told him that His Grace was not at home. But the Duke happened to be in the dining-room which looked on to the court, and suspecting his visitor to be a curate named Montagu, whom because of his name he had promised the reversion of Parson A—'s living, sent the footman to call him back, just as he was mounting his skeleton of a horse. "I am come," explained the curate after recalling himself to the Duke, "to see if your Grace is as good as your word."—"Is Parson A . . . then dead?"—"Yes." —"Why then, get a presentation to the living, bring it to me and I will sign it." *Tableau*, with everybody happy.

It was the Duke's interest in Ignatius Sancho, the learned negro, which was to earn this worthy the distinction of a memoir by Joseph Jekyll, M.P., and another in the Dictionary of National Biography. Born on a slave-ship and brought to England when only two, he had for some years been part of the household of three narrow-minded maiden ladies living at Greenwich, not far from which, i.e. at Blackheath, Montagu had a charming country residence. Meeting him by accident the Duke had conceived a sudden liking for him, being intrigued by "his native frankness of manner as yet unbroken by servitude and unrefined by education".[1] Frequently he brought him home to the Duchess, who, sharing her husband's delight in the youth, indulged his penchant for reading with gifts of books.

Feeling that his intelligence deserved cultivating, she recommended his stern mistresses to give him the benefit of a thorough education, but their view was that to educate him above his appropriate station in life would be doing Sancho [so named by them because of his supposed resemblance to Don Quixote's squire], a great disservice. When he became obstreperous, they threatened to restore him again to slavery. Seeing no hope for him if he remained with this family, Sancho boldly cut himself adrift. As his patron, the Duke, had just died, he solicited the protection of the Duchess,

[1] *Memoir*, by Joseph Jekyll.

but she dismissed him with a sharp reproof. However, as in his despair he threatened to shoot himself, she sufficiently relented to admit him into her household where he remained until her death, being named in the Duchess's will for a small pension. The Chaplain at Montagu House, and later the 3rd Duke of Montagu,[1] employed him, but gout and corpulency incapacitating him for private service, he opened a grocery shop, dying in December, 1780, aged 51. He wrote two pieces for the stage, as well as a book on the theory of music, and among his distinguished acquaintances claimed David Garrick and Sterne. His ambition was to play Othello, but defective articulation forced him to abandon the idea.[2]

The Duke loved mixing with all classes of people and learning the manner of their lives. It gave him more joy to be seen in the company of a great writer than in that of the proudest peer. When Steele in the summer of 1712 went to live in Bloomsbury Square, he welcomed him as a neighbour, and, on the occasion of a Whig demonstration which he had organized, made room for him in the ducal chaise.

He liked being thought erudite, so was overjoyed at being named a Fellow of the Royal Society and admitted Doctor of Physics at Cambridge, followed at his own suggestion by election as a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. He did not regard these distinctions as empty honours, was often present at the delivery of the Harveian oration, and threw open Montagu House, as we learn from a letter written by the Duchess of Bedford,[3] for the electrical experiments carried out by Mr. Baker of the Royal Society, " the most extraordinary thing one can imagine ".

But, above all, he was in his element in the company of brother Freemasons, whose cause languished until, on June 24th, 1721, he became Grand Master. Grand Lodge, over which he presided, had for its birthplace *The Goose and Gridiron* in St. Paul's Churchyard, a celebrated house of call for coaches for Hammersmith and the villages west of London. The name of the tavern would have appealed to his sense of humour, being chosen to ridicule *The Swan and Harp*, which was a common sign of the early music houses.[4] As he was nothing if not gallant, beyond a doubt the Duke must often have exchanged pleasantries with Hannah, the handsome serving-wench, who was one of the attractions of the inn.

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The infinite variety of His Grace's interests helped to compensate him for the disappointments of his married life. He had started out with high hopes, desiring that he and his wife should go laughing through life together—a rather tall order. But, all too soon, he discovered that the lady of his

[1] Actually the 1st Duke : new creation.

[2] In Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes* the following excellent story is told. Sancho, serving with the Duke of Montagu, was sent to ask the character of a cook who lived with a native West Indian planter, then residing in London. Upon Sancho delivering the message verbally, the haughty creole, eyeing him disdainfully from head to foot, asked, " Why, fellow, cannot your master come himself ? " " Sir," was the reply, " when an English nobleman sends a servant out of livery to another nobleman he means to do him an honour, but when to a plebian, he does him greater honour."

[3] *The Russells in Bloomsbury*, by Gladys Scott Thomson.

[4] *English Freemasonry : The Grand Lodge of England*, by Albert F. Calvert, P.M.

choice preferred to laugh without him, though apart from one saucy exploit, when she and her sister, Lady Sunderland, attended an exhibition in the Cockpit, Whitehall, disguised as servant maids (and were easily recognised), scarcely appears to have relished the sportive or jocular pranks to which her husband was prone. Possibly she regarded his sense of humour as an esoteric growth which she might reasonably ask to be spared. At any rate she never associated herself with his drolleries, or, apart from conventional entertainments such as dinners, fancy-dress balls and visits to the Continent, with any of his social enterprises. As for the humane activities which must ever keep his memory green, when she did not frown on them, she left them severely alone.

Fed by few mutually-shared sympathies, the union lost its fine edge and showed unmistakable signs of wear and tear. Only in the early and late years did it yield either husband or wife much satisfaction. Yet, to begin with, it had been hailed as a true love romance, and if only the man's feelings had needed to be considered, it could truthfully have passed as such. But the woman's feelings had also to be taken into account. Cold and calculating, Lady Mary chose to regard the union as no more than a good match linking two wealthy and important families. While she liked her handsome husband, with his charming manners and boyish love of fun, well enough, she did not love him. He was incapable of reaching her heart, or what served as her heart. This might be guessed from a quickly-developed tendency to seek her own friends and amusements.

After 1714, she had a good excuse for withdrawing herself from her husband's society: she was at the beck and call of the Princess of Wales (afterwards Queen Caroline) to whom she had been appointed Lady of the Bedchamber. But when in December, 1717, she resigned the position to avoid being ostracised by the king, who, after a furious quarrel with His Royal Highness, barred any of the Prince's household from Court, it was not so easy to come and go when she pleased, and she had, necessarily, to make some pretence at least of consulting her husband's wishes. Even before 1714 she seems to have behaved as if the Duke were the last person in the world to control her movements, and had he been at all the jealous type of husband, terrible ructions must have ensued.

The Duke's steadfast refusal to accept the construction which society put on the more imprudent of his wife's intimacies can only be put down to the great love he bore her. He was sensible of her many faults, but could not conceive they extended to betrayal of his honour. For this reason, and also because he took her side in the wordy warfare which she waged with her exacting mother, the bond between them, however great the strain it had to bear, never snapped. They remained good friends, if no more, with the promise of a complete return to the correct relationship implicit not only in what they did, but in what they left undone.

Advancing age, which took increasing toll of the Duchess's high spirits, made her less amenable to adventures, and since he had just as much reason for wishing for a settled home life, they eventually came together, firmly resolved to give the world no further reason for advertising their disunity. This happier state of affairs provoked Sarah to sarcastic comment. Still

at loggerheads with her undutiful daughter, she could not resist the opportunity of a dig at her. Writing to her granddaughter, Diana, Duchess of Bedford, as late as October 15th, 1734, or when the Duke and Duchess of Montagu had been married some twenty years, she remarked, with characteristic cattishness, " I was told your aunt Montague and her Duke are grown excessive fond of one another, which is quite new on one side ", from which we may deduce that the marriage had not been a happy one and that the cause lay with her daughter's unloving nature.

The old Duchess had much reason for being outspoken on the subject of the marriage, for it had been one of her triumphs as a matchmaker. Frequently she had boasted of having married Lady Mary " to the chief match of England in all respects ". " If it had not been for my favour," insisted Sarah with unpleasant vehemence, " she must have been married to some country gentleman with £1,500 or £2,000 a year, which, for ought I know, might have been better for her and for me—at least 'tis probable it would have made her behave better."[1]

Lady Mary, her head turned by the homage paid her good looks by a host of admirers all clamouring for her hand, was already spoilt when she married Montagu, and being deeply in love he made matters worse for himself by foolishly pampering her least pardonable whims. Had he been firmer with her from the start, probably he would have saved both of them long periods of unhappiness. But he was a gentle, easy-going kind of man, who loathed quarrelling and was horrified by the thought of seeing repeated under his own roof those domestic wrangles for which his circle was notorious. So resort was had to the time-honoured expedient of semi-detached lives with this curious result: that the more the Duke was disposed to allow his wife to go her own untrammelled way, the more eager she was to share his life. Only when a privilege was denied her, or made more difficult of access, did she value it.

This was particularly the case in 1720, when they revisited the Continent together, separating at Paris, instead of continuing on, as usual, to some such watering-place as Spa. Bolingbroke, still in disgrace, was staying at the time in the French capital, but neither the Duke nor the Duchess appears to have come across him. The Duchess's complaining letters to her consort, seemingly quite happy and contented on his own account, and not in the least anxious to rejoin her, bear eloquent witness to her dissatisfied, petulant nature. Everything about Paris, the people and the arrangements for her amusement, were wrong. Her cousin, the Duke of Berwick, was in no hurry to show her round, and she wondered whether he was credited with a great deal of sense. The Duchess of Berwick looked a very ill-humoured woman [surely a case of the pot calling the kettle black!], and was no better bred than her equals in England. It was hopeless to try and compete with the Frenchwomen, who rouged themselves unmercifully, their faces looking as if a piece of scarlet cloth had been applied. Their hair short, curled and powdered, they sat all day talking about the beauty of their dress, and were the most ridiculous people in the world. Finally, three or four days of Paris

[1] Blenheim MSS. Quoted in *John and Sarah, Duke and Duchess of Marlborough*, by Stuart J. Reid.

had wearied her, and she was going to bed tired to death of herself. Her one hope was that the Duke would never feel that way.

Even more cheerless was a second letter. She was going on to Blois, being heartily sick of Paris. She had seen the king [Louis XV.] when he had gone out hunting; he was handsome but ill-bred, and disdained to bow to her, though she and her party were quite close. Concluding, the Duchess remarked she had bought the Duke the prettiest nightgown imaginable, which she hoped he would like. Lady Waldegrave would bring it him in a week, a clear sign that the Duchess and her husband were to remain apart for the rest of the holiday.

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An extreme individualist, with a double dose of eccentricity, the Duke, possibly, was not pre-eminently cut out for the rôle of married man, or, for that matter, for any form of discipline requiring strict conformity to a particular pattern of conduct. But even a model consort, short of being a saint, would have turned refractory if subjected to too prolonged doses of the temper of so disturbing and self-opinionated a wife as Lady Mary Churchill. Obdurate and conceited to an insufferable degree, she never learnt till late in life that dutifulness was an attribute in which a good wife might rightfully take pride. The Duke of Marlborough, who hated to think a daughter of his should have such an unlovable disposition, told his wife he wondered why she and Lady Mary failed to agree, since they were so much alike. But this was only correct to a point. They were alike in faults, in disdain and distrust of advice, in abhorrence of contradiction, in personal vanity; but completely at variance where such primal virtues as moral courage, duty and constancy of affection were concerned. Little did the Duchess of Montagu deserve the bouquets of Pope, as later he himself must have concluded, since he substituted ridicule. "Angel, goddess Montagu", he had called her, whereas when angered she more resembled a fiend than an angel.

No child of John and Sarah Churchill could be other than intelligent. Had Lady Mary's mental endowment included a more generous measure of common sense, which is quite distinct from cleverness, she might not have fallen into the error of belittling her husband's activities, misled by the belief that she was much the cleverer of the two, which besides being presumptuous, was false. As Dr. Stukeley said, the Duke was no scholar, but he had a fine genius. How one appraised him was all a matter of standards. In Lady Mary's circle, the test of cleverness was the ability to find a short cut to wealth and power. In the circle to whose ideas the Duke mostly clung, the test of cleverness was the ability to achieve happiness for oneself and one's fellowmen: to leave the world a little better than one found it. For, stripped of his eccentricities, Montagu was essentially a man of noble heart, to whom any form of suffering, whether in man or beast, was abhorrent. He was not the Duchess's or her mother's idea of a great man, but greatness is not to be measured solely by extent of concrete achievement; otherwise Socrates would appear humble by the side of Alexander.

How little at first the Duchess valued her husband could be judged from her early neglect of him in favour of men who, in moral worth, were not fit

to lick his boots. But she was careful not to air her views too openly, and it is possible that long before the *rapprochement* already spoken of she had learned her mistake. It was her mother who remained, as always, his most uncompromising detractor, convinced that he was far too cranky, irresolute and whimsical to earn outstanding distinction, and that such honours and appointments as were likely to fall to his share would be due to family influence, or to his being an important factor at Elections, and not at all to personal merit. A sneer was ever on her lips at the mention of his name. When in 1737 Lord Westmorland, deprived of the captaincy of the fourth troop of Horse Guards, a position he had bought, was replaced by the Duke of Montagu, who had formerly sold the troop to Lord Pembroke, the apt but unkindly comment of the old Duchess was that the Court had taken away a troop of Horse Guards from Lord Westmorland, who never had anything in the army but what he bought, to give it to the Duke of Montagu, who never had anything but what he had sold.[1]

Lord Hervey, our authority for the Duchess's gibe, had an equal contempt for the Duke, and commenting on a motion affecting Scotland, which that same year Montagu had seconded, said his zeal for Scotland had opened a mouth that had been shut for fifty odd years, and which (like that of Balaam's ass), now opened for the last time, as well as the first. And when in 1733 the Duke succeeded the Duke of Bolton in the government of the Isle of Wight, it was to Lord Hervey a case of a man of little more consequence than being a Duke, who, after long wavering between the Court and the Opposition, had taken the opportunity "to sell himself for full as much as he was worth, by getting the income of this employment increased to £1,500 a year".[2] Lord Hervey's wit and pungent diction should not blind us to the fact that he was disposed to belittle all and sundry.

A man of Montagu's versatility and generous instincts was bound to strike him as a most suitable target for his destructive comment. Mixing with Sarah, aged, disillusioned, bitter-tongued, and hearing her tart allusions to her fool of a son-in-law, Lord Hervey must have felt that if in condemning Montagu he erred at all, it was in being too moderate.

It should be clearly understood that from the beginning of her widowhood, the Duchess of Marlborough, so far from being a help to Montagu, was a decided hindrance, supplying those eager to damage him with ammunition for the purpose. That was her nature and there was no arguing with her; but it was all very sad. For properly handled, the Duke might have been led, much earlier, to take a more serious view of his political opportunities, though one feels it would have been at the expense of his happiness. Not so long would he have preserved that jaunty attitude to life, which was a sign that age had obtained no serious lodgement in his spirit. His energies, instead of being diffused over a hundred and one activities, many of them trifling and at the best having only a self-entertainment value, might have been concentrated on one important objective. But when he turned to his wife and mother-in-law, the two women whose influence over him might have been salutary, all he got were apathetic gestures or flouts and jeers. Schooled to withstand taunts and jibes, he held on, and his reward was to

[1], [2] *Lord Hervey's Memoirs;* edited by Romney Sedgwick.

get more happiness out of life than came the way of all his relatives put together.

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Besides being an indifferent wife and daughter, the Duchess of Montagu was a poor sort of mother—the kind that drives daughters into early and often imprudent marriages. Her shortcomings in this respect can scarcely have made the atmosphere of Montagu House more acceptable to a husband all too conscious of figuring in the same neglect. It is urged, though with what truth it is hard to say, that Sarah was annoyed to find Lady Mary a Duchess at 21, more especially as her own star was fast dimming. Whether in turn the Duchess of Montagu was jealous of her own daughters is equally uncertain, but that she showed them very little real affection and was disposed to regard them as encumbrances, is fairly susceptible of proof. Both were pretty and like herself high-spirited, and both were disinclined to be treated like naughty and rebellious children; yet, as though to shame her own conduct to the aged Duchess, they were never so undutiful as to refuse to champion her. "Duchess of Manchester," said Sarah one day to Isabella, the elder daughter, "you are a good creature and I love you mightily, but *you have a mother*."—"And *she has a mother*," was the unexpected but honest reply. It was unexpected, because for a number of years the old Duchess had made herself responsible for Isabella's upbringing. "I pitied her," explained Sarah, "and for all that time [fifteen years] acted the part of a kind grandmother which most people know. I loved her as much as if she had been my own child, and never pretended to use my authority over her, but conversed with her as if we had been sisters." Both Isabella and her sister Mary [married to George Brudenell, Earl of Cardigan, afterwards Marquis of Monthermer and Duke of Montagu] were glad to achieve independence by early marriage, prosperous in the latter case, disappointing in the other.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who kept up a close intimacy with the Duchess of Montagu, gives a piquant but wholly misleading picture of Isabella's courtship by William, 2nd Duke of Manchester. "Belle is at this instant in the paradisal state of receiving visits every day from a passionate lover, who is her first love, whom she thinks the first gentleman in Europe, and is, besides that, Duke of Manchester. Her mamma and I often laugh and sigh reflecting on her felicity, the consummation of which will be in a fortnight [they were married on April 16th, 1723]. In the meantime they are permitted to be alone together every day and all the day." This picture is misleading, because Isabella's indifference to her husband was notorious, and confirmed by the unconcern with which she received his death on October 21st, 1739. Writing to Lady Throckmorton on September 26th, 1739, Mrs. Ann Granville makes this pertinent comment: "Unless it is the Duke and Duchess of Portland, there is not a couple in London but grow happily indifferent in six months! and if they drag the chains as many years, *what joy it is to part*. A present instance is the Duchess of Manchester; Her Duke is dying, and do you think she'll spoil her eyes with crying? No, no; she has better employment for them."[1]

[1] *Mrs. Delany's Correspondence.*

The wretched husband realised that his wife had no love for him, for all he left her was the furniture of the two rooms above stairs, which the Duchess of Marlborough had furnished. His fortune went to his brother, Robert, the 3rd Duke.[1]

That Isabella had inherited much of her father's eccentricity is beyond question. According to papers left by Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, she was in the habit of rising from breakfast with her parrot, monkey and lapdog. The world gasped when Richard Lumley, 2nd Earl of Scarborough, who was her second choice, committed suicide on the eve of his marriage, being subject, it was stated, to melancholy and fits of depression. But society was no less shocked to hear of his place at the altar being taken by a comparatively obscure Irishman named Edward Hussey, who on his father-in-law's death in 1749 assumed the name of Montagu, a change designed to facilitate his ennoblement.

Petitioning the king on his behalf, the Duchess of Manchester urged that as elder daughter of the 2nd Duke of Montagu, all of whose titles were extinct on his death, it was not unreasonable on her part to hope for the honour of an English barony for her [Irish] husband, whose family by their endeavours to support the king against the usurper, Oliver Cromwell, had lost the same rank in Ireland. The king replied that for the time being it was not his intention to create more peers, and both husband and wife had to possess their souls in patience until 1762, when he was made Baron Beaulieu, the Earldom following at an interval of twenty-two years.

In satiric verse, which had a great vogue, Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, to whom we have already referred, poked great fun at the marriage, which, he declared, showed what little difference there was between the Duchess and the Hussey. But if somewhat of an adventurer, Hussey had a well-established reputation for personal courage, and the audacious poet was lucky to escape the ordeal of a duel.

Self-willed, and as heartless as her mother, Isabella took advantage of the family discord to exploit her own capricious tendencies, for until 1734 when, if Sarah is rightly understood, her parents celebrated a second honeymoon, the domestic atmosphere at Montagu House was rather straitened; though the presence of the Duke and Duchess of Montagu at the splendid entertainments which were a feature of the establishment tended to give an impression of matrimonial harmony. There were no unpleasant scenes because they were never in each other's way. Having so many residences to choose from, it was always easy for them to cultivate their own particular set of friends, and at the same time to avoid ill-natured comment. For his part the Duke, who often grew tired of the artificialities of aristocratic society, liked nothing so much as to steal away from his palatial mansions and seek comparative seclusion at one of the tiny abodes he maintained for his own particular use, notably Ragman's Castle, a small house situated opposite the lane which continues Orleans Road and leads down to the river at Twickenham. How it got its name is an unsolved mystery. Some aver it was built by a rag-and-bone millionaire; others maintain that the site formerly housed a tavern which was a favourite

[1] *The Complete Peerage.*

resort of bargemen, beggars, etc.[1] What we do know for certain is that the house was originally owned by Lady Falkland, the austere lady who was scandalised by the report that the penniless poet, Matt. Prior, was to marry her, and that it was taken over from her by the Duke of Montagu, who under the leafy trees loved to share a meal with a special friend.

However much the Duke shut himself away, he could hardly hope to escape the gossip that proclaimed him a cuckold, gossip to which his own sister, Lady Anne Harvey, contributed. Angered at being called a fool by the Duchess, whom she had often befriended, she chose a gathering of women friends [May, 1711] to turn on her. It might be, as the Duchess had observed, that she was a fool, but she was an honest fool, and had not wronged her husband's bed,[2] whereas Her Grace had had affairs with the Duke of Grafton and the Marshal [Lord Villiers, 2nd Earl of Jersey], charges to which the Duchess thought it best to make no reply.[3] How much her reputation had suffered could be gathered from a letter written by Lady Strafford in December of that same year: "The Duke of Montagu and Lord Jersey are the dearest friends that ever was, which is a great jest to the town, because the Duchess and Lord Jersey had been so a great while."[4] That, in face of his sister's "exposure", the Duke should continue to associate with Lord Jersey, is only to be explained by his unshakable confidence in his wife's loyalty, and, no doubt, by the denials of both that there had been anything wrong between them.

There was nothing new in the gossip which painted the Duchess as addicted to affairs. It had been about for years. Swift, whose ears were open to all the scandalous chit-chat floating round London, heard of the Duchess's supposed "goings-on" at least three years earlier, as we see from the letter he sent his trusted friend, Charles Ford, on November 12th, 1708: "When you talk morally about Mrs. Tofts [the Drury Lane actress], Lady Monthermer [until the Duke succeeded his father she was so-called], and the rest, I think upon what St. Evremond says of *Dévotes*, that when they call their sins to mind in order for repentance, the truth of the matter is, they take a delight in remembering them."[5]

On Ford's birthday [January 31st, 1723], Swift sent him some lines indicating that the passage of time had only confirmed his poor opinion of the Duchess:

> The nymphs with whom you first began
> Are each become a harridan ;
> And Mountague so far decay'd
> That now her lovers must be pay'd ;
>
> . . . . .
>
> Then, for a middle-aged charmer
> Stella may vye with your Mountharmer
> She's now as handsome ev'ry bit
> And has a thousand times her wit.[6]

[1] *Memorials of Twickenham*, by R. S. Cobbett.
[2] She was the wife of General Daniel Harvey, and lived until 1742.
[3], [4] *Wentworth Papers.*
[5] *Une dévotion nouvelle plait en tout, jusqu'à parler des vieux péchés dont on se repent.*
[6] *The Letters of Swift and Ford*; edited by David Nicol Smith, 1935.

Perhaps in 1734 when, according to Sarah, the Duke and Duchess were on surprisingly loving terms, they had agreed to forgive and forget. Perhaps, for all we know, the man had as much reason to crave, as to offer, forgiveness. Neither's life was an open book into which all could peer at will. What had happened was natural, almost inevitable, seeing that it was to the interest of both to maintain the bond. They had reached that sensible age when folly loses much of its temptation, and the pursuit of pleasure for purely selfish ends sheds its allure. The one 44, the other 45, they were sufficiently advanced in years to realise that there were few blessings comparable with a peaceful domesticity presided over by a community of sympathy, as well as by mutual affection and respect.

With both daughters married and immersed in their own separate and distinct preoccupations, with Marlborough dead and Sarah definitely estranged, with so many fond friends gone never to return, they can hardly have avoided a sense of loneliness. So that to take refuge in each other's company, as thirty years before they had pledged themselves to do to the last day, seemed a sensible, logical conclusion. They had just moved into their delightful house in Whitehall, recently completed, and possibly had judged the occasion an appropriate one for beginning their joint life afresh. It might be they had the feeling that the new Montagu House was destined to achieve happier memories than those associated with the residence they were abandoning. A grandchild merrily scampering along the lofty passages might make all the difference. As yet neither of their daughters had been blessed with offspring,[1] and while they were reconciled to the idea, painful enough in all conscience, of the Dukedom, which had been Ralph Montagu's final triumph, petering out, they refused to, indeed they dared not, contemplate the prospect of the goodly race of Boughton Montagues going the same way—to annihilation.

This, then, was the position as it presented itself to the Montagu couple in 1734, a mixture of hope and fears. Knowing what was passing in the minds of husband and wife, we can well understand how irresistible were the forces making for reunion.

That year, it may be recalled, was remarkable for witnessing the death at the reputed age of 94—some accounts say 96—of the crazy Duchess of Albemarle, who, hidden away in Newcastle House, Clerkenwell Close, one of the historic homes of the Dukes of Newcastle, had for twenty-five years, following the demise of her cunning spouse, kept up her imaginary court, served on the knee as befitted the "Empress of China", seeing nothing, knowing nothing, during the whole of that time, of her stepson, the 2nd Duke of Montagu, who, if left to his own devices, would have been a kindly and considerate gaoler. His Duchess, however, would not hear of it. She had enough to put up with in the shape of a husband who was himself uncommonly queer, without wanting to be saddled with a certified lunatic, even if she were his stepmother and positively rolling in wealth.

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[1] By her first marriage Isabella had no offspring. Her union with Mr. Hussey produced a son, John Hussey Montagu, born in 1747, who, however, died in his father's lifetime. Mary, the younger daughter, had a child, Elizabeth, born in 1743, whose privilege and distinction it was to unite the Montagues with the ducal house of Buccleuch.

The new Montagu House, of which we have spoken, completed in the spring of 1733, showed the Duke to be as keen and business-like a planner as his father. In both the acquisition of the necessary land and the designing and building of the stately mansion, he seems to have displayed great acumen, wholly disposing of Sarah's prejudiced opinion of him as a simpleton. The main part of the site he purchased from Viscount Molesworth and Colonel Charles Churchill [Marlborough's brother], each of whom had been granted a Crown lease, but had done nothing to develop his property; the remainder was a subsequent grant made to himself. Later, with the permission of the Crown and despite the protest of a neighbour, Joseph Smith, who objected to his amenities being prejudiced, he took over a large greensward. Still dissatisfied, he joined with his next-door neighbour, the Duke of Richmond, in a petition for a grant of the foreshore of the Thames between high and low watermark. The portion he was allowed to enclose greatly exceeded the width of his property, cutting off from the river Smith's house and part of the Duke of Portland's. The costly undertaking of forming an embankment he left to those who came after him.[1]

His Grace had not only a good eye to business, but also imaginative vision, which might have had momentous results for the country. In the summer of 1722 he had received a grant of the islands of St. Lucia and St. Vincent, and had not the French interposed by insisting on their neutrality, he had intended to embark on grandiose schemes of exploitation. In Beaulieu Creek, near Lymington, an area where he had great possessions [brought into the family by his father's marriage with Lady Northumberland, heiress of the great Earl of Southampton], he proposed making a seaport and depot for his West Indian trade, and it is to be regretted that, through no fault of his own, he was deprived of the incentive for what might well have been a prosperous enterprise.

He took a great interest in Beaulieu, which appealed to his antiquarian tastes. He was well posted up in the privileges possessed by its Cistercian Abbey, founded at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and this knowledge helped him to repel a visitation from the Archdeacon. Beaulieu, he pointed out to him, not only owned special rights of sanctuary, but was exempt from ordinary ecclesiastical surveillance. If the reverend gentleman, despite his objections, insisted on coming, he promised to arm his yeomen with thick slats, which they would use to such purpose that the Archdeacon and his minions would be in no hurry to repeat the visit.

The Duke had not his father's passionate liking for fine paintings, but he knew a good picture when he saw it, and in particular was proud of the collection of flower pictures, many from the brush of Baptiste, hung at Boughton. These he allowed the Dutch painter, Jan Van Huysum, justly celebrated for the exquisite finish of his fruit and flower pieces, to copy for Sir Robert Walpole, and it may well be that inspiration for quite a number of his masterpieces, for which collectors now so keenly compete, came from what he saw at the Duke's Northamptonshire home.

[1] Montagu House, built by the 2nd Duke, was demolished, and the present building, now the Ministry of Labour, erected from the design of William Burn in 1859–62, being occupied, when completed, by the Duke of Buccleuch. See *L.C.C. Survey of London*. Vol. XIII. Parish of St. Margaret's.

But the appeal of art, like numerous other interests to claim his fancy, was a mere ripple on the surface of his nature. What deeply moved him was suffering in man or beast. This, so far as rested with him, he strove to allay. He was never tired of giving, and to seek out and help those who preferred unprotestingly to starve, remained his greatest satisfaction. To the end of his days he maintained on his Northants estate a hospital for old horses and cows. None of his tenants at Boughton dared kill a broken-winded horse. In common with his other domestic animals, it had to be cared for until the end of its days. He shared Euripides' love for dogs of low degree. Never was there a creature so ugly as his special lapdog. Asked to explain his partiality for the most unattractive specimens, he replied, "I show them kindness because nobody else does."[1]

To his last testament, executed just before his death, he added two codicils, one safeguarding the future of his servants, the other that of his cat and dogs, to whom he bequeathed legacies. No one who loved him was forgotten. Understandable, then, was the objection of the men of Northampton, enrolled in a regiment raised to fight the Young Pretender's forces, to march under anybody's command but their beloved Duke's. Horace Walpole, who had the highest regard for his qualities, says as he was drawing up the codicil benefiting the animals, one of his cats jumped on his knee. "What!" said the Duke, "have you a mind to be a witness, too? You can't, because you are a party concerned."

Having no opinion of the wisdom and discretion of his daughter, Isabella, who had annoyed both her parents by her marriage with Edward Hussey, regarded by them as a mere fortune-hunter, he made Mary, the second daughter, heiress of all his estates. But in 1752, both the Duke and Duchess of Montagu being dead, the two sisters, as the result of Chancery proceedings, agreed on an equitable division of the property.

The cause of the Duke's death, which took place on July 6th, 1749, seems to have been pneumonia. "He will be greatly missed", declared Horace Walpole. He had held the title for forty years. Anne was reigning when he succeeded and George II. when he died. With him passed away the head of all the "cues", the nickname of the large Montagu circle which included the Duke of Richmond, and, it should be added, the last male Montagu of the House of Boughton. His wife followed at an interval of two years, dying on May 14th, 1751. She was immensely rich, although by her callous disregard of her mother's feelings, she had forfeited all right to a share of the old lady's huge fortune. All she received under the will were a gold snuffbox containing two miniatures of her father, a miniature of him covered with a large diamond, and enamels of her sisters, the Countess of Sunderland and the Duchess of Bridgewater.

With the Duchess's death, the £2,000 a year she had inherited from her father passed to the Duke of Marlborough, but the house in Privy Gardens and the one in Blackheath, together with a considerable sum of money, went to enrich the second daughter, (Mary) Lady Cardigan. The marriage of Lady Cardigan's own daughter Elizabeth to Henry Scott, 3rd Duke of Buccleuch, explains why, beginning with their son, Charles William, 4th Duke

[1] Supplement, *Spence's Anecdotes*, Edition 1855.

of Buccleuch, the family name changed to Montagu-Scott [later Montagu-Douglas-Scott], and why Montagu House, Whitehall, became the town residence of this historic family. In the Duchess of Buccleuch, his granddaughter, the 2nd Duke of Montagu lived again, minus his frivolous impulses. As we learn from Sir Walter Scott's Journal, charity with her, as with her eccentric but great-hearted grandparent, was a passion of the soul, her benefactions outrunning even her princely resources.

CHAPTER NINE

THE FASCINATING "GAOLER"

IF to marry a witty woman, especially one conscious of her wit, is folly, then, by the same reckoning, to marry a witty woman who is likewise strong-willed and violently self-opinionated, is twice as dangerous, indeed, the height of madness. Least qualified of all men to take the fearful double risk was Edward, 3rd Earl of Sandwich, who in choosing as his bride Elizabeth Wilmot, the brilliant and largely uncontrollable daughter of that famous rake, the 2nd Earl of Rochester, was not only flattering, but entirely misjudging, his power of control. Such was his feebleness of character that his will never stood an earthly chance of counting against hers. The best he could hope for was to be allowed meekly to say " ditto " to her instructions, all too often reinforced with blistering wit. It was an unkind fate that threw him into the path of this gifted but wholly selfish creature and condemned him to be known to posterity as the husband of the witty Lady Sandwich, usually branded in contemporary anecdotage as his gaoler.

Having regard to her remarkable personality and the vagaries of her behaviour, it is extraordinary what little notice she received at the hands of writers of the period, and how seldom the eighteenth-century letter-writers were moved, or had occasion, to refer to her. The explanation, possibly, is the number of years she absented herself from England, though this scarcely applies to the silence practised by her equally fascinating and adventurous cousin, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, in whose voluminous correspondence her name was to appear only once, and that casually. Here the reason for not mentioning her is obvious dislike and jealousy. That enmity should exist between the two women, each of whom prided herself on her good looks, culture, vivacity and wit, was a natural consequence of the embittered relations prevailing between the Earl of Sandwich and that importunate creditor, his rich uncle, the Hon. Sidney Wortley Montagu [second son of the gallant 1st Earl of Sandwich], who was Lady Mary's father-in-law. To him Lord Sandwich, a poor business man, had heavily mortgaged his possessions, and in course of time had to submit to both his estates and person being controlled by this unsentimental relative. For a period the uncle insisted on an exchange of houses. While he took over Hinchingbrooke, Huntingdon, where his political ambitions were centred, Sandwich was domiciled at Wortley Hall, near Leeds, where he underwent a certain amount of restraint,[1] presumably unavoidable.

Wortley Hall, it should be explained, had come to the uncle by reason of his marriage with wealthy Anne Newcomen, the illegitimate daughter of Sir Francis Wortley, who had inherited her father's estates in London conditionally on her husband assuming the name of Wortley. Again, while Lady Sandwich was an incorrigible Tory and a vehement Jacobite to boot, the Montagues were vehement Whigs, and the year 1714 would see Edward

[1] *Victoria History of Huntingdon.*

MARY, 3RD DUCHESS OF MONTAGU
(After the portrait by Thomas Gainsborough)

NINON DE L'ENCLOS
(After the portrait by Mignard)

Wortley Montagu, husband of Lady Mary, a Commissioner of the Treasury, thanks to the interest taken in him by his cousin, Lord Halifax, a member of the great Whig Junto. Thus there was a political as well as a personal reason for the cousins' mutual dislike.

That the Wilmots and the Montagues should be linked in marriage was not surprising, since their conjunction as rivals or allies seemed part of Nature's inscrutable purpose. The raffish Earl of Rochester had started his tempestuous career by sailing with the fleet under the 1st Earl of Sandwich's command, distinguishing himself in several actions by his coolness and bravery. Though much attached to his Commander and desirous of showing him every loyalty, he was not to be deterred from competing with his son, Lord Hinchingbrooke, for the hand and purse of the heiress, Elizabeth Mallet, granddaughter of Lord Hawley [Gentleman of the Bedchamber to James, Duke of York, 1673], and possibly sister of the eccentric Lieut.-General Henry Hawley, who stated in his will that "he began the world with nothing."[1]

Had Rochester confined himself to being an honourable rival, all would have been well; but normal behaviour was abhorrent to him, and without waiting for the young lady to express her mind, he forcibly abducted her. Only after the lapse of many weeks did he venture to atone for his rascally behaviour by making her his wife. In 1689, when he had been in his grave nine years, Elizabeth, his second daughter, named after her mother, put paid to the account by marrying Hinchingbrooke's son and heir, to whom she brought the substantial dowry of £22,000.[2] She was then probably seventeen years of age.

Such traits as Lady Sandwich derived from her placid-tempered mother were too mild, and certainly too few, decisively to affect her disposition, and it would be no exaggeration to say that in all essentials she was cast in her father's mould. Emphasising the resemblance between father and daughter was the capacity for witty, frank, and engaging conversation which she early displayed. In all phases of her extended career this was to make her a seductive personality, sought after by all who valued the tonic effect of acquaintance with a woman of unusual mental gifts. Those in a position to compare parent and child were wont to affirm that, in the degree and quality of wit, Lady Sandwich was by far the superior, than which no finer tribute to her prowess can be imagined. So good a judge of wit and intelligence as Pope was charmed with her.

Writing from Bath, in 1714, to his friend, Mrs. Martha Blount, he speaks of beginning to know Lady Sandwich, "who has all the spirit of the last age, and all the gay experience of a pleasurable life. It was as scandalous an omission to come to the Bath and not see my Lady Sandwich as it had formerly been to have travelled to Rome without visiting the Queen of Sweden. She is, in a word, the best thing this country has to boast of; and as she has been all that a woman of spirit could be, so she still continues that easy and independent creature that a sensible woman always will be."

Lady Sandwich, more fortunate than her cousin, Lady Mary Wortley

[1] *The Complete Peerage.*
[2] *Journals* of the Duc de Luynes.

Montagu, was never to cause the poet to change his favourable opinion of her, possibly because she was careful not to wound his pride by ill-timed mockery. Her reputation, so far from waning with the years, seemed ever to acquire new strength. This may be gathered from the fact that in 1751, or thirty-seven years after her meeting with Pope at Bath, the fastidious Earl of Chesterfield was impressed to write this letter to his son. "*À propos des beaux esprits*, have you *les entrées* at Lady Sandwich's, who, old as she was, when I saw her last, had the strongest parts of any woman I ever knew in my life? If you are not acquainted with her, either the Duchess d'Aiguillon or Lady Hervey can, and I dare say will, introduce you. I can assure you it is very well worth your while, both upon her own account, and for the sake of the people of wit and learning who frequent her. In such companies there is always something to be learned, as well as manners; the conversation turns upon something above trifles: some point of literature, criticism, history, etc., is discussed with ingenuity and good manners."[1]

Wit in conversation tends to lose much of its point and sparkle on being transferred to paper. Gone are spontaneity and surprise, the essentials of verbal wit, as if in the more deliberate atmosphere of the written medium they automatically evaporate. That consideration lessens to some extent the regret we feel at the absence of letters from Lady Sandwich fully capable of demonstrating her quality. The letter to be quoted, the only one available, gives but a faint idea of her mental sprightliness. She is returning thanks to the poet, Matthew Prior, himself a considerable wit, for the gift of an engraving by Vertue of his portrait by Richardson:

"Feb. 20, 1718.

"What Solomon with all his wisdom, and all the graces you have adorned him with, could not do, the first sight of your sweet face performed in a moment; all sullenness vanished. I immediately changed places, put myself in the wrong and you in the right, and am impatient to thank you for the agreeable surprise [the engraving] you gave me to-day. I admire the painter [Richardson], though I don't see his colours, the attitude and the lively expression of the figure, which is lost in black and white; but, above all, the near resemblance to the original, and I find by all there remains more kindness in my heart for him than I was aware of. I had rather the world were mad than dull; good for anything I am sure it cannot be. I imagine the grand dance in the *Rehearsal* marching to Exchange Alley, law and divinity taking vast pains to cheat; and in the end be cheated also.

"I admire the present taste in pleasure. What can be a more suitable entertainment for the unbended hours of the great than the politeness, the wit and dignity that reigns in masquerades. And yet for all these temptations I am perfectly easy in my solitude, and want only more *Almas*, more *Solomons*, more *Damons* to make it a life of pleasure as well as happiness. Well, but now I reflect that after talking so much and so impertinently to you (the last man on earth one should take that sort of freedom with), 'tis fit I should take my place in the foolish world,

[1] *Chesterfield Letters* : Edited by Bonamy Dobrée.

but wherever my fantastical stars shall throw me [she had obviously been refreshing her memories of Donne], I beg you to believe that I am, with a constant esteem, Your, etc."

Lady Sandwich liked Prior, a saucy, amusing fellow, because he was witty, had much claim to genius, knew Paris well, took a broad view of human conduct, and had some understanding of unusual women, especially those who were not too strait-laced to be comfortable company. She felt at ease with him, which was not always the case with other men, who regarded a visit as an occasion for tender speeches, or what is politely described as gallantry. On occasion she was as good a hand at flattery as her admirers, and here we see her going out of her way to please Prior beyond his deserts. His *Alma*, which Pope described as "loose and hasty scribble", may still be read for its humour, but his *Solomon* is boring and Dr. Johnson can be excused for yawning over it.

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Like her father, Lady Sandwich abominated dreary people, particularly those of restricted and commonplace outlook. Hence, she was usually to be found among those whose destiny, to repeat her own phrase, was harnessed to "fantastical stars", in other words, were at the mercy of an impish Providence up to all manner of tricks. We do well to weigh carefully the scraps of self-revelation that she allowed to escape her, for they are the key to her astonishing personality as well as the explanation of her curious behaviour. A wealth of enlightenment is contained in that memorable sentence, "I had rather the world were mad than dull." Had the gentle and inoffensive Earl of Sandwich, a mere shadow of his dauntless ancestor, the colleague of Blake, who on July 8th, 1689, was wedded by licence to this troublesome piece of human quicksilver, been blessed with the gift of foresight, or possessed the slightest talent for reading character, he would, if he valued his peace of mind, or had had much mind to speak of, steered clear of Rochester's redoubtable daughter. He was no fit mate for a woman who respected only genius, to which he could offer little pretence, and who, if not forcibly restrained by one of more dominant character, would always insist on "wearing the trousers".

The first few years of married life seem to have passed without disagreeable incidents, though, judging from the offspring they brought into the world, three sickly children and a fourth not destined to live long, they had little encouragement to be fruitful and multiply. Lady Sandwich amused herself by championing the Tory cause at Huntingdon, scandalizing the Montagues, especially the Wortley Montagues, who reckoned to hold the various seats in the Whig interest, by occasionally getting one of her nominees elected. That this was done purposely to annoy her husband's uncle, who fancied he had a proprietorial right in the seats, we do not for a moment believe; though to put him in a temper would undoubtedly have afforded her great joy. She was merely expressing her detestation of the Whigs, to whose political views, notably the restriction of the powers of the king, she was utterly opposed. Like her father, she loved the Stuarts, and hungered

for the day when they would be restored. The Tories, as the only party likely to favour the Restoration, claimed her support and sympathy.

Different from Marlborough, Godolphin, Shrewsbury and even the great Lord Somers, who in their desire to be insured against all eventualities sat, at one time or another, on both sides of the fence, she adhered to the Stuart cause as a matter of passionate conviction. In her eyes that not very impressive figure, James the Old Pretender, was the rightful king. On March 31st, 1718, writing to congratulate him on his approaching marriage to Clementina Sobieska, a fanatical sort of woman quite unlikely to make him happy, she gave him this assurance of her devotion: "If anything could add to the faithful zeal I have ever had for your service, it would be the great honour you have done me by laying your commands on me, which I receive with all imaginable duty and respect."

For a Montagu to be wedded to a wife of such diametrically opposed principles was a distinct, not to say, unpleasant novelty for the family, but it is doubtful if the clash of opinion was in any wise responsible for the melancholy developments which, some time after 1700, probably 1705–6, overtook the household. The Earl's feeble grasp of affairs made it imperative for stern action to be taken, if the family estates were to be preserved for the successors to the title. Lady Sandwich had to consider not only the Earl's, but her own and her son's best interests, and, no doubt, it was only after painful cogitation that, having kept her husband for some years under restraint, she instructed her son, Edward Richard Montagu, Viscount Hinchingbrooke, a soldier by profession, described as an amiable, active and spirited young man, to take over his father's duties and responsibilities.[1] The Earl, it is said, was reduced to being a mere cypher in his own household, denied access to friends and relatives and stripped of every vestige of dignity and power. But we may be sure that had there been anything cruel or tyrannical about the proceeding, the son, though he loved his mother and shared her Tory sympathies, would not have been a party to it, and the Wortley Montagues, financially interested in the care of the estates, would not have hesitated to interfere.

Tongues wagged, as they always do in villages, where the temptation to transform any abnormal event into a nine days' wonder seems irresistible. Gossip went so far as to credit the Countess with all sorts of evil designs against her unfortunate spouse. She was pictured as an unnatural wife turned gaoler, who, for purposes of her own, had put her husband into close confinement. Rumour, running riot, spoke of the room in which he was confined as "the starved chamber", because of the meagre rations to which he was supposed to be restricted—all this, remember, with his son still alive, the Wortley Montagues watching the Countess, whom they hated, like a cat watching a mouse, and his kinsman, the 2nd Duke of Montagu, just over the county border at Boughton, hence easily accessible.

The limit of credulity was reached when, for years following the Earl's death, simple country-folk thought it quite possible that he had been poisoned; nor was the absence of police action to dismiss these crazy ideas from their minds. A letter addressed by a worthy Yorkshireman named Waller to the

[1] Buccleuch MSS., Vol. I.

2nd Duke of Montagu on September 22nd, 1730, illustrates the extent to which the mischievous tittle-tattle had taken root. ". . . Divers persons in Yorkshire and Huntingdonshire make no difficulty to say the late Earl of Sandwich was poisoned! I'm sure, if it could be discovered, 'twould be very pleasing in the eye of God. All as I have to offer is that the nobleman, when living, was according to the account of those people near Hinchingbrook in the hands of mercenary, vile creatures; and some gentleman in the country informed me that if Du Buison, who was confectioner about 25 years ago to the said Lord, could be found—who they informed me was a very worthy, honest gentleman—[he] could give your Grace a very authentic account of some poison that was offered to the said Lord in those days, but through the care of Du Buison was prevented to do mischief.

" P.S. If my affairs had permitted me, I should have taken a great deal of more pains than I have in search of the said Du Buison, who, I hear, is alive, and follows at this present the occupation of a dancing-master; but this is my consolation, that your Grace will please, if possible, to detect the villany."[1]

All that needs to be said about the contents of this letter and similarly wild utterances is that it was all so much poppycock. Lady Sandwich had nothing to gain from her husband's death. She had no wish to marry again and was comfortably off in her own right. Freed from any surveillance on the part of her weak-willed husband, she could do as she liked and go where she pleased. There is no suggestion of his ever wishing to interfere with her liberty of movement. To be compelled to put him under some sort of restraint, as also happened when he was staying at Wortley Hall, can have given her little satisfaction; indeed, it must have hurt her pride, since, after all, he had been her choice as husband.

There was no secret about the Earl being shut up. All the Montagu family was aware of what was taking place, but since they saw no reason to interfere, it is clear they regarded such action as necessary. In February, 1707, the Rev. Jeffrey Barton, cousin of Sir Isaac Newton's pretty niece, writing to Lady Anne Popham [later Lady Anne Harvey], sister of the 2nd Duke of Montagu, spoke of the efforts he had made to withdraw Lord Sandwich from the seclusion in which he was living " in the power of his servants ".[2] Barton, it should be explained, had a living at Rushden, Northants, which was quite near Hinchingbrooke, the Earl's seat.

Viscount Hinchingbrooke, the son, " a strenuous Tory", was returned in the autumn of 1713 as M.P. for Huntingdon. If in taking over control from his father he had done anything amiss, it is hardly likely he would be popular enough to win an always hotly contested fight.

Though drawn by her Stuart sympathies to pay constant visits to the Jacobite colony in Paris, Lady Sandwich seems to have remained on affable, if possibly not loving, terms with her husband for at least ten years. During one of her prolonged French trips she fell so dangerously ill that her life was despaired of. The Earl came rushing over, and Prior, who was acting as Secretary to the Embassy at Paris—he was daily expecting the arrival of the new Ambassador, Charles Montagu, the future 1st Duke of

[1] [2] Buccleuch MSS., Vol. I.

Manchester—describes with some humour what a thin time the unassuming husband had in the sick-room, swallowed up as he was among so many admirers of his wife. "Lady Sandwich is out of danger," he wrote his friend, the Earl of Jersey [June 20th, 1699], "but looks thin and has so many Abbés about her that to answer their fine nonsense exhausts her spirits and will give her (literally as the widow says) a relapse. My Lord [Sandwich] is eclipsed for this [these] five days past, but this is a great secret. They always say he is rid out, or gone a-hunting, but we think he has gone privately to England for coin, and that, if he had not done so, his honour would have been in the same circumstances as Davenant."[1]

Presumably Charles Davenant, the well-known Tory writer on economics, had been arrested for debt. The widow is Lady Falkland, whom rumour falsely suggested Prior was going to marry.

It is clear from this letter that, even as early as 1699, Lord Sandwich's financial position was seriously inconveniencing him. Most probably his straitened means, as well as his constitutional weakness, accounted for his apparent lack of ambition and push. Beyond being Lieutenant of his county and Master of the Horse to Prince George of Denmark, Anne's hard drinking, rather bovine consort, he does not appear to have distinguished himself in any way. He could, in fact, be said to be the least successful of all the ennobled Montagues.

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Lady Sandwich had been in Paris, off and on, for the better part of a year, having originally gone over in 1698, accompanied by Dr. Morelli. A clever physician of Jewish extraction, he was the particular friend of Saint Evremond, the fascinating man of letters, who, exiled for certain imprudences from France, was as well-known at the court at Whitehall as the lovely Duchesse Mazarin, whom he adored. Her departure tempted the genial philosopher, whose chief joys in life were good eating and choice conversation, to sum her up in this benevolent fashion: "My Lady Sandwich has more wit than her father had: she is as generous as witty: as lovely as witty and generous. Here you have one part of her qualities."

He was describing her for the benefit of another witty person, the aged but eternally seductive courtesan, Ninon de l'Enclos, who would presently be calling Lady Sandwich her bosom-friend. Indeed, when she answered Evremond's letter, it was to offer her own independent tribute to those qualities in the English lady which he had so eloquently extolled. The happiness of having pleased Lady Sandwich had given her a thousand satisfactions. She did not believe that at her advanced age she would be a fit companion for a woman so much younger. Lady Sandwich had more wit than all the women in France and more true merit. Her prospective departure was a general source of grief, not least to the writer [Ninon]. If Saint Evremond had been there, they would have had entertainments worthy of the old days.

What nostalgic longings must have filled the exiled *littérateur's* breast as he mused over the last sentence!

[1] This letter and the one addressed by Lady Sandwich to Prior are to be found in the *Bath Papers*.

As Ninon was already 82, doubts about her ability to amuse Lady Sandwich, who was more than fifty years younger, were reasonable enough, though possibly not meant to be taken too seriously. For, if legend is to be trusted, she had latterly been indulging in what it must be hoped was her final love-affair. At any rate, the story is accepted by several of her biographers conscientious enough to jib at much that passes for truth concerning this *grande amoureuse*. The lover who succumbed to her octogenarian charms was a kinsman, the Abbé Gedoyn, a naïve fellow of 23, whom she had put off until her eightieth birthday. He had been content to be the last in a long line of lovers, ranging from the Maréchal de Richelieu, whose turn had come more than half a century before, to the Colignys, the Villarceaux, the Sévignés, the Condés, the d'Albrets, the d'Effiats, etc., etc. A woman with such an experience of celebrated and fashionable lovers could not help being interesting, and since the daughter of the Earl of Rochester had little reason to be prudish, we can well understand her desire to be included in the fashionable company that met in the quiet house in the Rue des Tournelles. There, save for the Gedoyn incident, the aged enchantress decorously lived out her remaining months on earth, her manner redolent of the poise of those accustomed to Courts, and, what was worthier of study, of the grace, fast departing, which came in with the early decades of the seventeenth century.

St. Simon, never sparing in his censure, declares that once Ninon had thrown off the trammels of her body, everything at her house was conducted with a respect and an outward decency seldom approached by many of the august ladies in the land. Frailty apart, her friends, chosen from the most distinguished court circles, thought she was an estimable person, with enough virtues to make up for her innumerable sins. Curiosity was probably Lady Sandwich's main motive for wishing to be on Ninon's visiting list. If likely to shock her associates in England, such indiscretion had at least the merit of giving her a reputation for audacious behaviour. As for Ninon, while no doubt she was attracted by Lady Sandwich's witty and intellectual conversation, unquestionably she allowed other considerations to influence her. The Englishwoman was the wife of an Earl and daughter of an Earl, linked by birth and marriage to the most considerable figures in the English aristocracy; hence, in the view of people inclined to be snobs, a certain *kudos* attached to possessing her friendship. To be sought after by an English *grande dame* of her rank could be regarded as a distinct compliment.

Here, then, was the explanation of the joy which Ninon professed to find in Lady Sandwich's society, and of the exaggerated language of praise in which she referred to her when writing to old Evremond. Lady Sandwich had thrown off all sense of strangeness and adapted herself to French ways; she had thoroughly familiarized herself with the country and had tracked down all her hostess's favourite haunts. But great as was her adaptability, it was nothing compared with her wit, which she [Ninon] was sure would not wane as age crept on. That Lady Sandwich would not forget her was Ninon's final prayer.

Saint Evremond, who held that in the absence of the love-kindling force, judicious flattery was the best means of approach to a woman's heart, put

Ninon on good terms with herself by asserting that the extraordinary esteem in which Lady Sandwich held her, and the unqualified praise she applied to all her concerns, convinced him that the Englishwoman had good taste. He went on to say that he and Lady Sandwich had been present at a great entertainment given by Lord Jersey, formerly Paris Ambassador, and in the contest as to who should eat the heartiest meal he had not been worsted. As he was 83 and she not half his age, that, possibly, was an achievement to boast of, though even if slimming were not popular with the ladies two hundred and fifty years ago, they must be given credit for slender appetites.

While in Paris, Lord Jersey had found Lady Sandwich's society very congenial, and frankly confessed to Prior that, on returning to London, he had missed her. "One never knows a happiness", he remarked sententiously, "till one misses it. Pray persuade her to come home, but only because it is home. I promised to talk of Paris to her and I shall faithfully keep my word." In an earlier letter he had confessed to having discovered how right she was in most things; "on n'est guère poli ici, je vous assure, mais que faire?"[1] He had another reason for wishing for her early return. Lady Falkland [Prior's old flame], back from Paris, spoke of Lady Jersey, who had returned earlier, as dowdily dressed, having neither cloak, petticoat, nor anything in fashion, not even a commode—all very mortifying.

The Villiers family had successfully weathered the constitutional changes, and, great as was their debt to the Stuarts, they had managed to thrive under William III. Lord Jersey was a good-tempered, fairly competent man of affairs, destined to succeed the Duke of Shrewsbury as Lord Chamberlain. As a personality he was much less colourful than his sister, Elizabeth Villiers, with not more than a tithe of her brains. Until 1694, she had been William's mistress, receiving from him extravagant gifts of land and money. She could scarcely be called good-looking, for she squinted like a dragon. Her influence over the king was said to be due entirely to her great mental powers, which sounds rather like a tale. Macaulay surmises that Lord Orkney, her distant cousin, to whom she was married in 1695, "probably held the courtier-like doctrine that a lady is not dishonoured by having been the paramour of a king." It is just as likely he considered a woman with her large possessions entitled to be judged differently from the common herd.

Lady Jersey belonged to the house of Chiffinch, conspicuous for the delicate services the members were privileged to render Charles II. in the ordering of his entertaining, though not exactly edifying, private life. Her father, William Chiffinch,[2] and her mother, formerly Barbara Nunn, showed great dexterity and skill in the handling of the Whitehall beauties. Such services demanded and received handsome acknowledgment. The Chiffinches were rich enough to endow their daughter, Barbara, subsequently Lady Jersey, with a substantial fortune. The man further earned his royal master's gratitude by attending to the pension from Louis XIV.

Lady Jersey, who shared Lady Sandwich's Jacobite sympathies, made the most of her friendship with Rochester's daughter, but it is questionable

[1] They are scarcely polite here, I assure you, but what is to be done ?
[2] Portrayed by Sir Walter Scott in *Peveril of the Peak*.

whether there was much sincerity in the attachment, handicapped as it was by the disparity in their intellectual and cultural attainments.

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Among the Abbés who had crowded round Lady Sandwich's sick-bed was Dubois, the future Cardinal, whom Prior speaks of as behaving like a dog to Lord and Lady Sandwich. He had already established his claim to be among the greatest scoundrels unhung. Though his scholarly equipment was slight, he began life as tutor to the Duc de Chartres, afterwards Duc d'Orléans, who during the minority of Louis XV. was to act as Regent. He ingratiated himself with this weak-willed, good-natured debauchee by much the same kind of service as the Chiffinches performed for Charles II. Though his immorality and dishonesty, as well as his lack of breeding and manners, were notorious, that did not prevent him from winning his Cardinal's cap and becoming Foreign Minister. Nor were his ugliness and stammer to handicap him in the rôle of gallant any more than his vulgarity was to prejudice him in the rôle of statesman. He wormed his way into most fashionable *salons*, and was the recipient of many of Ninon's unblushing confidences. Utterly without shame and untroubled by any respect for the proprieties of age, he brought off a host of cheap conquests. Lady Sandwich, amused by his conversation, welcomed the opportunity of meeting him at Ninon's and elsewhere, but as soon as she sensed his real character, she behaved to him much as her cousin, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, behaved towards Pope on being "honoured" with a declaration of love.

Of the Montagues, the only one for whom Lady Sandwich appears to have had much regard was Ralph Montagu [in 1700 Earl of Montagu], a brilliant conversationalist, witty himself and the cause of wit in others, with an intimate knowledge of Paris and its celebrities, stories of whom she was never tired of hearing, always provided the details were not too brutally skimped. Whatever the theme—Paris, love, adventure, intrigue, or such interesting figures as Charles II., *Madame*, Louis XIV., Duchesse de la Vallière, Buckingham, Molière, Boileau, La Fontaine—in her Ralph Montagu could be sure of having an attentive listener.

Probably none of Lady Sandwich's friends stood in greater need of her kindly attentions than Saint Evremond, whose life had been thrown into confusion by the death of the Duchesse Mazarin. As Sainte-Beuve says, "The Duchesse was a part of his life and more essential than Ninon herself." Reading between the lines of those gushing letters in which he held up Lady Sandwich to such praise, one has the impression that he was trusting to her friendship to repair the void in his existence. Having no desire, after an exile lasting forty years, to return to Paris, he had to regard Ninon, save for an exchange of letters, as something detached from his life, too far removed to bring him that personal sympathy and recreation for which, in his lonely decrepitude, now, more than ever, he yearned. His last hope of warding off boredom lay in being taken up by Rochester's brilliant daughter. No other woman of his acquaintance in London was capable of satisfying his exacting mental requirements.

Hence his sorrow at being debarred by ill-health, in the summer of 1700,

from joining Lord Montagu at sunny Boughton, where Lady Sandwich was to be a fellow-guest. There, as he says, he would have enjoyed good conversation before and after the best cheer in the world. His comments are worth repeating: "No person ever merited to be more magnificently receiv'd and more handsomely entertain'd, than my Lady Sandwich; no man was more proper to receive and entertain her than my Lord Montagu. I hope the Cascade, the Octagon, the water-sheafs and the water-spouts [notable features of the resplendent out-of-door appointments of Boughton] shall have made my Lady Sandwich forget France. And as my Lord is very happy in inspiring his taste and his designs as to buildings and gardens, I don't question but she will soon undertake some new work at Hinchingbrooke, which will not be behind those of Boughton in any respect. It is impossible for anyone to be more sensible than I am of the honour of her remembrance. There was nothing wanting to perfect my grief for not having seen Boughton and the master of the place, but my not having seen Hinchingbrooke and its mistress, who is the greatest ornament of all the places where she is."

He was writing to Dr. Pierre Sylvestre, his literary executor, who belonged to Lord Montagu's household and was physician to William III. His unguarded language shows how genuine was his sorrow at being deprived of so enviable an opportunity of regaling both his body and his mind, the one with sumptuous fare, the other with a lively exchange of wit and instructed opinion. His belief that Lady Sandwich would trouble her pretty head over alterations to Hinchingbrooke was founded on an entire misconception of the state of the Sandwich finances, as well as of her character. She had neither love for Hinchingbrooke nor for its master. Her heart, as always, was in Paris, and at the first opportunity she would sunder all ties with the historic mansion fated presently to be her husband's sanatorium.

That in the last few years of his life Lady Sandwich contrived to solace the lonely hours of the desolate old Frenchman, still mourning for his beloved Hortense [Duchesse Mazarin], tends in some degree to redeem her character from the stigma of utter selfishness. It was not a case of benefits being all on one side. Such pleasure as she gave was returned in double measure in the shape of mellow philosophy—the ripe wisdom of a very old man who had seen the best and worst of the world, without his consistently benevolent attitude to human nature undergoing much modification. Mankind, he was convinced, only superficially changed. Under the skin the generations remained the same in primal feeling; and this lesson, with all the strength left to him, he sought to impart to the adventurous, high-spirited lady, who so often, and with such seeming patience, listened to his *obiter dicta*.[1]

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Saint Evremond died in 1703, or three years before Ninon, the friend of his youth. Ralph, Duke of Montagu, followed in 1709, and the Earl of

[1] The most convenient authority for Saint Evremond is the scholarly edition of his letters edited by John Hayward; Routledge, 21s. The introduction and notes clear up all points likely to interest the reader.

Jersey in 1711—a rapid depletion of her English circle of friends which gave her much food for thought. As Lady Jersey, without troubling to pay her debts, had scurried to France, taking with her all she could lay hands on,[1] Lady Sandwich must have felt sorely tempted to follow suit. Still greater must have been the temptation when, with the crowning of George I. in 1714, all hope of a Jacobite restoration seemed to vanish. However, her meeting that year with Pope in Bath indicated that she was not yet prepared to make a decisive break with this country. She had her son to think of, and it was necessary to keep an attentive eye on the Earl. She compromised between desire and necessity by visits to Paris of ever-lengthening duration. Latterly, she had formed a close friendship with the Duchesse de Berri, the Regent's daughter, renowned for her wit but for little else, and had come to be looked upon as a prospective addition to the Jacobite colony spread along the south bank of the river.

In 1715, when the Regency started, Lady Sandwich was probably in her forty-fourth year, an age when the sensible woman relies as much on the fascinations of the mind as on personal charms to ensure herself a place in the best social circles. Her wit and her conversational brilliancy remained undiminished, but her ambition now was less to impress herself on Paris as a blue-stocking, than to be accepted as a figure of social and political importance. For this purpose she made full use of the Duchesse de Berri and of the leading supporters of the Old Pretender's cause, while always careful not to become an object of suspicion to the British authorities, whose spies kept them well-informed of the Jacobite plans and intrigues. In particular, she steered clear of Bolingbroke, who in his temporary purblindness fancied he could knock wisdom and prudence into the head of would-be James III.

Had not Lady Sandwich been a strong-minded woman, not easily led away, she might have had good reason to regret her partiality for the society of the Duchesse de Berri, whose wit, grace and beauty scarcely atoned for the most reprehensibly immoral conduct. She possessed all her gay father's vices without any of his atoning qualities. "He had been her preceptor in these matters (vices); she became his imitator and surpassed him. . . . Hardly had she been married when she had love-affairs, wherein the respect which was due to her station compelled her to make the advances. The liaison which she had with La Haye, her husband's equerry, was carried to an incredible degree of frenzy. Not satisfied with showing her passion, she proposed to her lover to take her to Holland."[2] La Haye, knowing what danger he incurred, prudently declined to fall in with her views.

That Lady Sandwich should pretend to find delight in kotowing to this crazy Princess reveals the extent to which she was influenced by the rule of life, *rather a mad than a dull world*, proclaimed in her letter to Matthew Prior in 1718. Perhaps in part it was the desire to outshine her Jacobite friend, Lady Jersey, who since her arrival in Paris had become socially very active. "She is always dining and supping with the top people,"

[1] Lord Berkeley of Stratton in a letter dated October 11th, 1713. See *The Complete Peerage*.

[2] *Select Memoirs of the Regency*: by C. P. Duclos, historiographer of France.

wrote Dominick Sheldon to the titular Duke of Mar on June 14th, 1718, "so that, thank God, I can never find her at home. It is a strange ambition that she and another here of the same kind [Lady Sandwich?] have to be thought knowing and consequently useful."[1]

Had Lady Sandwich had a heart and not been all head, she would have been greatly affected by the loss, in 1722, of her son, Lord Hinchingbrooke, even though consoled by the knowledge that he had left a son, the future 4th Earl of Sandwich, whose very mixed career was to give him, among other dispensable rewards, the not very flattering pseudonym of Jemmy Twitcher. Reversely, the death of the wretched Earl, his grandfather, seven years later, can only have come as welcome news—relief from an irksome tie which for over twenty years had represented merely meaningless anxiety. She had then been living in Paris more or less permanently for four years, her visits to England, short and hurried, being few and far between. They would have been still fewer had it not been for Lady Stafford, her most cherished English friend, from whom she could not bear to be long separated, and to a less degree for Lady Hervey (the celebrated Mary Lepel, whose beauty, good sense and wit, Lord Chesterfield, Horace Walpole, and Voltaire were alike to praise). Lady Sandwich was as devoted to the former, the witty daughter of the Comte de Grammont and *La Belle* Hamilton (whom under pressure he had married), as Lady Stafford was to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Had all three been sympathetically inclined, we should have seen the three wittiest women in England constantly meeting under the same roof.

That, in 1727, Lady Sandwich[2] should find it pleasant to spend a holiday in the country with Lady Stafford was understandable, remembering how well-matched in brains and sprightliness they were. Lord Hervey said of Lady Stafford: "She had as much wit, humour and entertainment in her as any man or woman I ever knew, with a great justness in her way of thinking, and very little reserve in her manner of giving her opinion of things and people."[3] In this verdict Horace Walpole fully concurred. He remembered to have seen her when quite a child: "She used to live at Twickenham when Mary Wortley and the Duke of Wharton [Philip Wharton, 1st Duke] lived there too; she had more wit than both of them. What would I give to have had Strawberry Hill twenty years ago?" [Walpole is writing in the year 1751, and Lady Stafford had been dead exactly twelve years.] "Lady Stafford used to say to her sister, 'Well, child, I have come without my wit to-day'; that is, she had not taken her opium, which she was forced to do if she had any appointment to be in particular spirits."

Lady Sandwich required no such stimulants to be vivacious and brilliant, and it was to the extreme care she took of herself that her longevity is to be attributed. In the winter of 1728, she and Lady Stafford, whose sister was an Abbess in Lorraine, spent some time together in France. Thereafter they were constantly meeting in Paris, Lady Sandwich having her own house in the pleasantly situated Rue de Vaugirard, close to the Palace

[1] Stuart MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm., Vol. VI, p. 525.
[2] *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Her Times*: by George Paston.
[3] *Hervey Memoirs.*

of the Luxembourg, where her friend, the Duchesse de Berri, dead these several years, had lived.

In those early days of the Regency, walking through the beautiful Luxembourg gardens, she may often have passed a dreamy young man whose visions of beauty the precious enclave of green was to reanimate; she may, we say, actually have brushed shoulders with that supreme genius in paint, Antoine Watteau, whose favourite promenade, as well as source of inspiration, was the park, still to-day the rendezvous of the artist, the writer, the poet. But what, in his lifetime, would the name of Watteau have meant to a woman of fashion whose hero was the Old Pretender?

Lady Sandwich's means permitted her to run a small *salon*, mostly patronised by members of the French aristocracy, notably by that great lady, the Dowager Duchesse d'Aiguillon, who had translated into French Pope's *Eloïsa to Abelard* and also one of Ossian's poems. Walpole described her to Lady Hervey as "a delightful creature, cheerful, jolly, handsome, good-humoured," and as near an approach to a woman of quality as he had come across. Lady Hervey, who was often the guest of the Duke and Duchess of Richmond at their Paris residence, was one of the few English patrons which the *salon* boasted.

As Lady Sandwich could not pretend to rival Mme. Geoffrin in the conduct of a *salon*, she did the next best thing—she induced Mme. Geoffrin to be seen in her own. From 267, Rue St. Honoré, where the Frenchwoman lived, it was a fairly easy step to the Rue Vaugirard; consequently meetings were a simple matter of arrangement. Though they affected to be friends the two were sharply antipathetic, and we have to bear this in mind when estimating how far Mme. Geoffrin, in her unflattering references to Lady Sandwich, exaggerated, or even departed from the strict truth. The Englishwoman could not forget that Mme. Geoffrin was the daughter of a valet and the wife of a bourgeois, and actuated by snobbery she was disposed to undervalue her achievement. Yet, as we know from Marmontel, without any tincture of letters or the arts, and without the advantage of studying anything except superficially, Mme. Geoffrin never appeared ignorant in lettered or artistic circles.

The Frenchwoman was too shrewd not to perceive what was passing in the other's mind, and some eight years after Lady Sandwich's death, being coaxed into conversation by that delightful collector of gossip, the Rev. William Cole, antiquary and Rector of Bletchley,[1] described how she had impressed her. The two first met in 1725, when Lady Sandwich was preparing to make Paris her permanent home. At that period, according to Mme. Geoffrin, she was neither handsome nor pretty, but remarkable rather for a starched and settled personality, which kept at a most forbidding distance those of her acquaintances weak enough to submit to such treatment. "One of the most haughty and proud women I ever remember", was how Mme. Geoffrin summed her up.

As often happens with people puffed up with a sense of their social importance, Lady Sandwich was meanly deferential to those whom she courted as being her superiors. Mme. Geoffrin recalls an instance of

[1] *A Journal of my Journey to Paris in the year* 1765: by the Rev. Wm. Cole.

which she was an eye-witness. Taking leave of the Princesse de Carignan, admittedly a person of exalted rank, Lady Sandwich escorted her to the outer door and, in token of respect, kissed the hem of the Princesse's robe. On returning to the other guests, who, unperceived by the hostess, had been joined by Mme. Geoffrin, an unwelcome visitor at such a delicate moment, Lady Sandwich realised her obsequiousness had not passed unnoticed, and by her faltering excuses and subsequent embarrassed behaviour all too plainly revealed her chagrin.

As we suggested at the outset, some allowance must be made for Mme. Geoffrin's biassed mentality, the good lady, as she showed in her relations with Mme. Du Deffand, being a vigorous hater; but in essentials the picture bears all the marks of truth. Lady Sandwich was a fearful snob—socially, if not intellectually.

. . . . . .

Wrapped up in the lives of the witty, careless and immoral French *noblesse*, whose want of a solid conscience was to make the French Revolution, though scarcely its horrors, inevitable, Lady Sandwich droned away her life, eclipsed, so far as English interest was concerned, by the more spectacular performances of her adventurous cousin, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Unlike her father, the Earl of Rochester, who was to enrich posterity by a slim volume of graceful verse, which, much as the record of his profligacy, keeps his memory green, she was destined to leave behind no permanent memorial of herself, save a legend of wit, whose quality, unfortunately, we have few means of sampling. Full of years, she died on July 17th, 1757.

That merciless critic, Mme. Geoffrin, would have us believe that she died with a lie on her lips, but this can be proved to be not strictly accurate. The lie was on her lips, but the date was wrong. During her last illness she was affectionately tended by the Duchesse d'Aiguillon. The very night she expired, declares Mme. Geoffrin, she sent for the Duchesse in a hurry. Protesting she had left her everything, she embraced her in her dying arms, and, thus supported, passed away. When the will was opened, it was found that the Duchesse had not been left a single farthing; all went to the grandson, the Earl of Sandwich, a person Lady Sandwich had always abhorred.

Such is Mme. Geoffrin's story, which sounded so plausible to Cole that, with commendable charity, remembering he was a clergyman, he ventured to suggest a less discreditable motive than base deceit for Lady Sandwich's conduct. The great and ruling passion of pride had triumphed over ordinary feelings of decency. The desire to augment her family's wealth had extinguished the less violent passion of friendship, and even got the better of her inveterate hatred for her grandson. Lady Sandwich had merely conformed to the practice of many great people, who, while heartily hating their own children, yet love their posterity with an affection that can spring only from pride and vanity.

It is possible that Lady Sandwich may once have hated her grandson, but have veered round at the first sign of his coming to the fore in politics,

as when he acted as nominal head of the Admiralty in the absence of the Duke of Bedford, who was furthering his career. Only as her end approached did she feel the need to alter her will in his favour, having until then devised the bulk of her possessions for the benefit of the Duchesse d'Aiguillon.

The story of dying in the Duchesse's arms is a fanciful elaboration, which may or may not have proceeded from Mme. Geoffrin's own brain. What happened on the last day was much more prosaic, as we gather from the Duc de Luynes's trustworthy memoirs. She had invited the Abbé Alary to dinner and, suspecting that her last hours were at hand, refused to heed his earnest plea to be allowed to leave. After remarking to him that she had wanted to die decently, she suddenly expired. The Abbé, and not the Duchesse, was the witness of her passing.

What is true in Mme. Geoffrin's story is the deceit practised on the Duchesse, who, after an estrangement lasting some months, had been reconciled to Lady Sandwich. As if overjoyed by the event, Lady Sandwich, at the first convenient moment, hastened to assure her friend that she had revived the original will appointing her chief beneficiary. As a result, the good-hearted Duchesse could not do enough for her. Here, if ever, was a case of obtaining kindly service by false pretences, almost worthy of Charles II. How her father, Rochester, accustomed to the dissembling Restoration courtiers, would have smiled at hearing the details!

. . . . . .

The thought of the wonderful letters which the dead woman must have received from Ninon de l'Enclos kept Horace Walpole awake at nights, and great was his delight when Lord Sandwich gave him, or rather promised him, his grandmother's picture of the famous courtesan. But, as he reckoned matters up, the picture was only a foretaste of better things to come. The letters, the precious letters, were what he most craved. Alas! for Walpole's hopes, he had not bargained for the exercise of the barbarous *Droit d'Aubaine* [which, it was clearly understood, was to be remitted in Lady Sandwich's case], under which the king of France constituted himself heir of all foreigners dying in his country. The moment Lady Sandwich was dead, the police, acting on behalf of the king, broke into the house in the Rue Vaugirard and rifled and plundered the contents of her boxes, cupboards, and drawers.

As late as September 13th, 1757, when Lady Sandwich had already been in her grave two months, Walpole was confessing that he had not yet had either the picture or the letters, but was hopeful of getting both. "Don't wonder, Madam, at my eagerness," he wrote to Lady Hervey. "Besides a good quantity of natural impatience, I am now interested as an editor and printer. Think what a pride it would give me to print original letters of Ninon at Strawberry Hill!" He did not doubt that if Lady Hervey could help in their recovery, she would. Such a cause might communicate ardour even to Lady Stafford [*née* Cantillon], and he promised that if she would assist in recovering *Notre Dame des Amours*, he would add St. Raoul (the name of a favourite cat of Lady Stafford's) to his calendar.

What happened to the portrait and the letters is a mystery. None which Ninon is supposed to have written to Lady Sandwich has ever been printed,

and the inference is that either they did not exist or were destroyed. Twenty years later, i.e., on June 10th, 1777, Walpole referred for the last time to Lady Sandwich. Owing her memory no loyalty or gratitude, he confessed to the Countess of Ossory that she was no great hero [heroine] of his, no more than was Lord Rochester, who was represented in the famous picture at Warwick Castle [where also was a portrait of Lady Sandwich], crowning his monkey with laurel.

Walpole's loss was everybody's loss. Those letters, assuming they ever existed, would have enlarged our knowledge of Lady Sandwich as a young woman. More than her scrawls to Evremond, they might have taught us what the aged sorceress, standing on the brink of the grave, really thought of the vivacious Englishwoman, destined to outlive her by over half a century. They can hardly have failed to afford a revealing glimpse or two of the soul of this creature of many loves, whose mind, judging from her tasteful and decorous talk, functioned independently of her body.

How old was Lady Sandwich when she died? The Duc de Luynes says eighty-two. We should say eighty-five, but it is all pure guesswork. The wonderful thing about her was not so much the years she lived, as the period of history her career traversed. As a girl she knew Charles II. quite well, and must often have heard her father discuss him. She saw James II. crowned and witnessed his downfall. She lived through the reigns of William and Mary, Anne and George I., and when she died George II. had already been on the throne thirty years. During her term of life England had changed beyond all recognition, but for more than a third of her life her gaze had been averted from the land of her birth.

From that comfortable eyrie in the Rue Vaugirard she looked on a world narrowed to a select circle of rich and idle loungers, a world where pleasure had become a duty and happiness the appanage of the privileged few. The gardens of the Luxembourg were clothed in green; the sun, that last summer of her life, shone out bright and clear. Paris of The Pompadour lay bathed in a delusive calm. Beneath the pleasant surface of life sullen tragedy gathered strength as it awaited the hour to strike. But all that the old lady sensed was the magic and perfume of the city she had always worshipped and whose delights she was so loath to leave behind.

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